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Terror 'mule account' network busted in J&K

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6 top firms' mcap erodes by Rs 3L cr; TCS biggest loser

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Rahul, Padikkal pile on runs against Uttarakhand

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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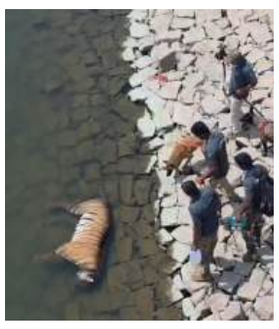

— SALAR

Tiger dies after being caught in snare in BRT

MYSURU, 15 FEB

A five to six -year-old male tiger was found dead after being caught in a snare at Gundal Reservoir in BRT Tiger Reserve limits of Chamarajanagar district, officials said on Sunday. The carcass was found by the Forest Department personnel on Sunday morning during a patrol, they said. Upon receiving the information, DCF S Sripathy, Range Forest Officer Vasu, and other officials visited the spot. The post-mortem conducted as per National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) revealed that the tiger died after being caught in a snare. Forest Department officials hope for more details as investigation continues.

—Salar News

Vote on motion to remove LS Speaker on 9 March: Rijiju

TAWANG, 15 FEB

The debate and subsequent vote on the no-confidence motion moved by the opposition against Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla will be taken up on March 9, when the House reassembles after the recess, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said here on Sunday. Rijiju stated that the second part of the Budget Session, scheduled from March 9 to April 2, will be "interesting" as several "important" legislations and a "critical" bill will be presented in Parliament for debate and passage. He warned that if opposition parties continue their protests as they did during the first part of the session, it would ultimately be detrimental to them.*—PTI*

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Woman killed for dowry in J'khand, body burnt

MEDININAGAR, 15 FEB

A 22-year-old woman has been allegedly murdered over dowry in Jharkhand's Palamu district, and her body was set on fire. The incident happened in Dalla village in the Pandu Police Station area on 13 February. The deceased hailed from Sonbhadra in UP and got married 11 months ago, they said. Police have started an investigation after receiving a complaint from the deceased woman's father. In his complaint, the father alleged that his daughter was frequently beaten and harassed over dowry since the wedding. Her body was burnt to hide evidence. SDPO (Vishrampur) Alok Kumar Tutti said bones and other remains of the victim were recovered from a forest near the village on 14 February. "A search is underway for the accused persons. All members of the in-laws' family are absconding," he said.*—PTI*

B'desh seeks fresh ties with India after BNP wins

Speaker to attend swearing-in; BNP dubs Hasina as terrorist

DHAKA, 15 FEB

Bangladesh is aiming to reset relations with India following the spectacular parliamentary election victory of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), with Humayun Kabir, adviser to BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman, stressing that the two nations should work together for "mutual benefit."

The BNP secured a sweeping two-thirds majority in the landmark elections held on Thursday, paving the way for Rahman to become Bangladesh's next prime minister. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla will represent India at Rahman's swearing-in ceremony on 17 February in Dhaka. The invitation had initially extended to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the external affairs ministry confirmed.

Kabir underscored the need for India to recognise the changed political reality, describing former premier Sheikh Hasina, who fled to India after August 2024's uprising, as a "terrorist" responsible for over 1,500 deaths. He urged New Delhi to prevent its territory from being used by Hasina or other Awami League figures in ways that could destabilise Bangladesh, asserting that "India must not be seen as complicit in any activities that undermine Bangladesh's sovereignty."

PM Narendra Modi and BNP Chief Tarique Rahman*—PTI*

Highlighting the recent cordial phone call between Modi and Rahman, Kabir said the BNP government will first focus on domestic priorities, including economic stability, before engaging in international visits such as to India.

On foreign policy, Kabir emphasised balanced relations amid growing regional competition involving India, China, and the US. "We will negotiate from a position of strength with a strong mandate from the people. National interest and the well-being of our territory will remain central," he said.

Addressing communal concerns, Kabir dismissed fears of attacks on minorities, particularly Hindus, noting that no incidents occurred even during the post-uprising vacuum in August.

Kabir also called for enhanced regional cooperation on counter-terrorism, including intelligence sharing, and reiterated that a BNP-led government would prioritise peace, prosperity, and integrated economic and security cooperation, positioning Bangladesh as a strategic conduit for broader regional ties. *—PTI*

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Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi gets decked up ahead of the AI Impact Summit 2026 on Sunday *—PTI*

AI Summit begins in Delhi today

NEW DELHI, 15 FEB

India is set to host the AI Impact Summit at the grand Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi from 16–20 February, bringing together global leaders, policymakers, industry chiefs and technology innovators. The high profile event underscores India's ambition to shape emerging rules, standards and opportunities in the era of artificial intelligence.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the summit, visit the Expo and engage with chief executives from leading global firms. International participation is strong: French President Emmanuel Macron and Brazilian President Lula da Silva are among the leaders scheduled to attend, reflecting broad global engagement.

SUMMIT IN NUMBERS

- Leaders from **20 nations, 100 CEOs, 500–600** startups to attend the summit.
- **45** countries have sent ministerial-level delegations.
- **300** exhibitors from 30 nations to showcase tech.

AI is no longer confined to research labs. It is transforming healthcare, agriculture, finance, education and corporate strategy, while reshaping work and daily life. For India, the summit is as much about showcasing capability as intent — highlighting its talent pool, expanding digital infrastructure and growing start up ecosystem, while positioning itself as an architect of responsible, scalable and inclusive AI solutions. The summit features 700 sessions and seven thematic working groups, co chaired by representatives from both the Global North and South. These groups will present proposals on AI Commons, trusted AI tools, shared compute infrastructure, and sector specific AI compendiums. A Russian delegation led by Maxim Oreshkin, senior aide to President Vladimir Putin, will also attend the summit. *—PTI*

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NO HANDSHAKE CONTINUES

Kishan, Bumrah power India to win over Pak

COLOMBO, 15 FEB

Ishan Kishan blended power with finesse in a scintillating 77 off 40 balls before Jasprit Bumrah dismantled Pakistan's top order as India stormed into the T20 World Cup Super Eight with a commanding 61-run victory in Colombo on Sunday.

The match, which had several preceding dramatic weeks because of the admixture of sports and politics, started off with India captain Suryakumar Yadav not exchanging a handshake with Pakistan skipper Salman Ali Agha at the toss, continuing a protocol followed since the Asia Cup 2025 in Dubai, after the Pahalgam massacre and Operation Sindoor.

Asked to bat, India posted 175 for seven on a tacky Premadasa surface, thanks largely to Kishan's supersonic knock — one of the finest Indian T20I innings given the conditions. He dominated an 87-run second-wicket stand with Tilak Varma (25), racing to his fifty in 27 balls while dismantling Pakistan's spinners, including Abrar Ahmed and Shadab Khan. His innings ended when he was stumped off Saim Ayub.

Indian players celebrate after winning the match against Pakistan, at R Premadasa Stadium, in Colombo on Sunday *—PTI*

Pakistan briefly clawed back as Ayub (3/25) removed Tilak and Hardik Pandya off successive deliveries. Suryakumar (32) and Shivam Dube (27) ensured India crossed 170, plundering 15 runs off Shaheen Shah Afridi in the final over.

Chasing 176, Pakistan collapsed early. Hardik dismissed Sahibzada Farhan in the first over before Bumrah (2/17) produced a masterclass, removing Ayub with an inswinging yorker and Agha with a back-of-length delivery. Babar Azam fell to Axar Patel as Pakistan slumped to 34 for four. Kuldeep Yadav, Axar, Tilak and Varun Chakravarthy tightened the screws as Pakistan were bowled out for 114. India now lead 8-1 in T20 World Cup meetings between the rivals. *—PTI*

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FIVE KILLED AS KSRTC BUS, CAR COLLIDE IN NELAMANGALA

BENGALURU, 15 FEB

Five people died in a collision involving a car and a KSRTC bus near Nelamangala on the city's outskirts, police said on Sunday.

The incident occurred on Saturday midnight when the car, heading towards Bengaluru, allegedly hit the divider, crossed over to the opposite lane and collided with the bus.

Police said the impact was so severe that the car's four occupants died on the spot, while the other, who was critically injured, was rushed to hospital, where he died.

Officials suspect the car was speeding and the driver might have lost control, leading to the accident. The car was severely damaged.

The deceased were all youngsters aged 17-22 years and residents of Doddabballapura. However, all 43 passengers in the bus escaped without any major injuries.

Following the accident, the bus passengers were shifted to another bus.

Madanayakanahalli police have registered a case.

Joint Commissioner of Police Karthik Reddy said it will be examined whether the driver of the car and its occupants had consumed alcohol.

The mother of one of the victims told reporters that her son had told her that he was going to a temple and would be late. *—PTI*

The farmers burnt copies of the trade agreements, claiming that the deal will lead to the death of Indian agriculture *—SALAR*

Mysuru farmers protest against trade deal with US

MYSURU, 15 FEB

Hundreds of farmers and other organisations protested near Kuvempu Park in Mysuru on Sunday against the Centre's proposed trade agreement with the United States.

The farmers from the District Sugarcane Growers Association and Farmers Federation, vented their anger by burning copies of the trade agreements, claiming the deal would sound the death knell for Indian agriculture. They fear that opening Indian markets to cheaper imported crops from the US, such as maize, soybean, and dairy products, would lead to a price crash, threatening their livelihoods.

Samyukta Kisan Morcha South India convener and President of the State Sugarcane Growers Association, Kurubur Shanthakumar, said the agreement is "anti-farmer" and would expose Indian cultivators to unfair competition. "American farmers receive massive government subsidies, up to 200 per cent, while Indian farmers get only three per cent," he pointed out.

Shanthakumar warned that the treaty could push Indian farmers into further distress, already reeling from falling crop prices, mounting debt, and rising input costs. He described the Indo-US trade deal as a serious threat to India's agrarian economy.

The protest reflects growing anxiety among farmers about international trade agreements and the potential impact of subsidised imports on domestic agriculture. The groups demanded that the government reconsider the deal to protect farmers' interests and ensure fair market conditions.

— Salar News

13 families face social boycott in Yadgir for questioning Mantapa

>>>More on Page 2

Missing K'taka student found dead in US

NEW YORK, 15 FEB

A 22-year-old Karnataka postgraduate student who went missing in the United States last week has been found dead, the Indian mission in San Francisco confirmed.

Saketh Sreenivasaiah, from Karnataka, was a Master of Science student at the University of California, Berkeley, pursuing Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering. He had been reported missing since Monday. His backpack, containing his passport and laptop, was discovered on a doorstep in the Park Hills neighbourhood, according to local news portal The Berkeley Scanner.

Sreenivasaiah held a BTech in Chemical Engineering from IIT Madras, graduating in 2025, before joining UC Berkeley.

In case of emergencies, Indians in the US can seek help from the Indian Embassy at +1 202-550-9931. The government has urged for Indians to report any untoward incidents immediately to the. *— PTI*

DOCUMENTARY HONOURS SECULAR VISIONARY K RAHMAN KHAN

A new Urdu documentary on Dr K Rahman Khan journals his unwavering commitment to education, social upliftment, and inclusive development.

Titled 'A Guiding Light for the Community', the documentary traces Dr Khan's contributions as a visionary leader who worked tirelessly for empowerment and institutional growth. His tenure in public life reflects a combination of integrity, foresight, and humility. The film emphasizes how his leadership extended beyond politics, focusing instead on strengthening communities, promoting harmony, and nurturing young minds.

Eminent personalities reflect on Dr Khan's impact. Former vice president Hamid Ansari speaks of his intellectual clarity and balanced approach to public service. Veteran statesman Yashwant Sinha acknowledges his steadfast principles and dedication to democratic values. Former Rajya Sabha MP Adeeb highlights his administrative vision and community-oriented initiatives. Former chief minister M Veerappa Moily reflects on his inclusive outlook, while former minister Roshan Baig and Salar Publications Trustee Sadaqat Peeran recall his accessibility and personal warmth.

Adding a lyrical dimension to the film is a soulful ghazal rendered by Raghu Pati Jhai.

The documentary stands as a historical record of a compassionate leader respected across political lines and ideologies.

Scan the QR code below to watch the documentary, streaming on Salar Urdu Digital Youtube from 15 February.

B'luru to host 6th India-France Defence Dialogue

Rajnath, French Defence Minister seek to deepen military ties, ink MoUs on Hammer missiles

BENGALURU, 15 FEB

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will hold talks with his French counterpart Catherine Vautrin in Bengaluru on 17 February, with some key outcomes expected from the bilateral dialogue to boost defence cooperation.

A defence cooperation agreement is expected to be renewed for another 10 years, with an MoU on joint venture for "manufacturing of Hammer missiles" likely to be signed at the meeting in the presence of both the ministers, the Defence Ministry in New Delhi said on Sunday.

"The two ministers are also expected to witness the virtual inauguration of the H125 Light Utility Helicopter Final Assembly of Tata Airbus by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron at Vemagal in Karnataka," it said in a statement.

Singh will co-chair the sixth India-France Annual Defence Dialogue with Minister of the Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs of France, Vautrin in Bengaluru on 17 February, the ministry said.

The meeting will review the entire gamut of bilateral defence cooperation, with a focus on expanding industrial collaboration, officials said.

An announcement is also expected with respect to reciprocal deployment of officers at the Indian Army and French Land Forces establishments, the defence ministry said.

Defence has traditionally formed an important pillar of the relationship between the two countries, the statement.

The "strong and enduring bilateral ties" were reflected in 2024-2025 through a series of high-profile exchanges, the statement said. Modi was the Guest of Honour at the Bastille Day Parade in July 2023, and the French President graced the Republic Day Parade 2024 as the chief guest.

"The recent India-EU Security and Defence Partnership marks a significant step in deepening collective engagement with European nations," the ministry added.

Military-to-military cooperation between the two nations is on the increase.

India and France have been regularly carrying out three major exercises -- Exercise Shakti with the Army, Exercise Varuna with the Navy, and Exercise Garuda with the Air Force -- and several other opportunity engagements, it said.

This would be Vautrin's first visit to India after she took over as the French Defence Minister on 12 October, 2025, the statement said.

The India-France Annual Defence Dialogue is a structured ministerial-level bilateral meeting to review and guide defence and security cooperation.

The fifth edition of the meeting was held in France from 11-13 October, 2023. *—PTI*

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will co-chair the sixth India-France Annual Defence Dialogue with his French counterpart Catherine Vautrin in Bengaluru on 17 February. They will witness the virtual inauguration of the H125 Light Utility Helicopter made by Tata ***PHOTOS: PTI/X***

Ashoka flays Cong over unpaid dues to contractors

BENGALURU, 15 FEB

Leader of Opposition in Karnataka Assembly R Ashoka on Sunday hit out at the Karnataka government, alleging "fiscal collapse" due to non-payment of over Rs 37,000 crore in pending bills to public works contractors.

The Karnataka State Contractors Association are also preparing a major protest at the Freedom Park here on 5 March, demanding the release of the money.

The BJP leader alleged that while the Congress-led government claims helplessness regarding contractor payments, it finds funds for publicity, appeasement and political management.

He noted that those affected are local contractors, engineers, suppliers and daily wage workers, who executed government works in good faith.

"Many have mortgaged homes, pledged family gold, and borrowed at high interest rates to complete public projects. Today, instead of clearing dues, this government is forcing them to protest on the streets," said Ashoka.

If the Karnataka Congress government cannot honour its commitments, it has no moral right to govern, he added.

Ashoka said, "Delayed payments mean stalled projects, job losses and economic slowdown across the state. The ripple effect of this irresponsibility will hurt Karnataka's growth and credibility."

The LoP called on the Chief Minister to break his silence, release the pending dues

"Governance is not about speeches and slogans, it is about responsibility. Karnataka deserves accountability, not excuses," he said, as he accused the ruling Congress of failing the State. *—PTI*

2 migrants killed in Mandya chemical tank explosion

MYSURU, 15 FEB

Two labourers from Bihar were killed when a chemical tank exploded at a factory in Mandya on Sunday, while four others were critically injured.

The incident occurred near Karekatte in the Basaralu region in Mandya, when the labourers were shifting the chemical tank because the factory, owned by Keerthi Chemical Industries, was being relocated due to safety concerns. The workers were dismantling the machinery and in the process of shifting it when the incident occurred at around 10am. They had been dismantling the plant for about a month.

The bodies of the deceased - Kaluhakhan, 27, and Ashok, 26 – were reduced to pieces due to the impact of the explosion. The injured - Khasim, Ravi, Mahantesh and Rajeev Kumar - were shifted to Mandya Institute of Medical Sciences (MIMS) and undergoing treatment there.

Officials inspect the factory owned by Keerthi Chemical Industries, in Mandya on Sunday ***PHOTOS: ANI***

"Cutting and fitting were in progress at the time," Kumar told ANI. He said the contractor, Guddu Khan, was not present at the scene.

EARLIER SAFETY LAPSES

Nearly four years ago, in 2022, there was a poisonous gas leak at the factory, affecting villages surrounding Karekatte. No human casualties were reported, but two dogs died. It affected standing crops across 100 acres of land.

Following strong opposition from farmers and locals, and the intervention of local MLA and district administration, the Keerthi Chemical Industries operations came to a halt.

The owners had therefore decided to shift the plant. *—Salar News*

'Fake' CMO docu row: BJP demands forensic probe into transfer note

BENGALURU, 15 FEB

BJP MLA V Sunil Kumar has demanded a forensic probe into an allegedly forged document linked to the Chief Minister's office, questioning the overall integrity and functioning of the administration.

This comes after the police registered a case on Friday following a complaint from the CMO over the circulation on social media of the fake note, which falsely claimed that a district health and family welfare officer in Mandya was posted as the deputy commissioner of excise in Mysuru.

The case was registered against an unidentified person at the Vidhana Soudha police station under BNS provisions on forgery and the use of forged documents. The CMO has alleged that the act was carried out with malicious intent to bring disrepute to the Congress government.

"If the letter bearing the Chief Minister's signature itself is fake, should we not

reflect on how the Chief Minister's Office is functioning?" Kumar asked on X on Saturday.

The BJP MLA from Karkala said the controversy raises serious questions on administrative oversight.

"This clearly shows that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is now focussed only on the chair and not on the functioning of his office," he alleged.

Demanding a forensic examination, Kumar said, "If this letter is fake, then the authenticity of the signature on it must also be established. It would not be surprising if this turns out to be a major 'letterhead' scam operating within the CMO." *— PTI*

ULSOOR RUNS DRY

A man fishing in an almost dried up Ulsoor lake on Sunday. The government drained the water last June to build a walkway and a Kalyani across historic lake at the cost of Rs 82 crore ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

Farmers arn't bargaining chips: CM on US deal

BENGALURU, 15 FEB

Demanding answers from PM Narendra Modi over the impact of the India-US interim trade deal, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday said the country's farmers are "not bargaining chips but the lifeline of the nation".

He urged the Prime Minister not to "compromise India's interests, trade away farmers for political gains, or bow to foreign pressure."

Siddaramaiah, on X, supported Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's attacks on the Union government over the interim deal.

- Siddaramaiah warned that the interim US-India trade deal could have dire effects on farmers, including in Karnataka

"The concerns raised by Rahul Gandhi about the impact of the India-US trade deal on our farmers, dairy sector, Minimum Support Price (MSP) system, and India's long-term agricultural independence deserve a clear and honest response from Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Siddarmaiah stated.

Siddaramaiah added that if the deal allows unchecked GM imports, weakens safeguards, or gradually opens more crops without protection, it would directly harm farmers across the country, including in Karnataka.

"PM Narendra Modi, do not sell India's interests. Do not trade away our farmers for political compulsions. Do not surrender to foreign pressure. Our farmers are not bargaining chips; they are the lifeline of this nation," he wrote. Gandhi had earlier met farmer leaders in Delhi. *—PTI*

BJP MLA Byrathi sent to 7-day CID custody in murder case

BENGALURU, 15 FEB

Byrathi Basavaraj was remanded to seven days of CID custody on Sunday in connection with a murder case.

The KR Puram MLA was produced before a magistrate at the judge's residence after doctors at the State-run Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research declared him medically stable.

Basavaraj, a former minister, is among the accused in the 15 July killing of Shivaprakash alias Bikla Shiva, a realtor and rowdy sheeter.

After his arrest, Basavaraj cited a cardiac condition, leading to further evaluation at Jayadeva Hospital.

Shivaprakash was allegedly hacked to death by eight people.

He was arrested at Bengaluru airport on Thursday after the Supreme Court declined to hear his plea against a High Court order denying anticipatory bail. *—PTI*

KSRTC REVISES LUGGAGE FEES

The Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation has hiked the luggage fee for passengers by 15 per cent. The changes will come into effect from 16 February. Passengers are allowed to carry luggage up to 30 kg free of cost, after which the hike will hit. They have been classified as 'stages', with one stage equalling 6km.

Here's what it look like

Rs 6 for stages 1 to 5 **(up from Rs 5)**

Rs 12 for stages 6-12 **(up from 10 Rs)**

Rs 145 for stages 156 to 160 **(up from Rs 123)**

TOGETHER IN PRAYER

On Mahashivratri, devotees flock to temples across Karnataka

MYSURU, 15 FEB

Thousands of devotees on Sunday offered prayers at Male Mahadeshwara temple in Chamarajanagar, Srikanteshwara temple in Nanjangud, Trineshwara temple and other Shiva temples in Mysuru and Chamarajanagar to mark 'Mahashivaratri.'

Devotees could be seen visiting the temples since early morning to offer flowers, belpatra, fruits, milk, and other items before the deity.

Special poojas will also continue from Sunday evening till early Monday morning.

Special poojas were also held at the Sri Trineshwaraswamy temple inside the Mysuru Palace premises, which attracted thousands of visitors.

A five kilo golden mask adorned the presiding deity at the ancient temple on the occasion.

The matriarch of the royal family Pramoda Devi Wadiyar also offered prayer at the temple.

The 11 kg golden mask with which the Shivling of the temple was adorned during the festival drew a large number of devotees.

The mask known as 'Chinnada Kolaga' was donated to the temple by the last Maharaja of Mysore Jayachamarajendra Wadiyar on the occasion of the birth of his son Srikantadutta Narasimharaja Wadiyar in 1953.

Rudrabhishekha and other rituals were conducted in all Shiva temples.

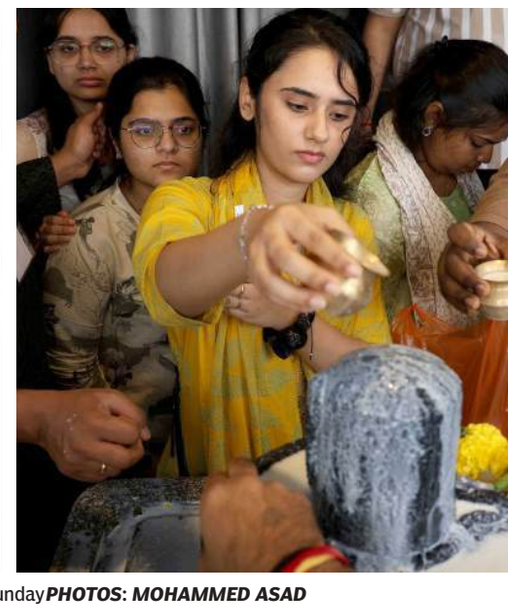
In MM Hills in Chamarajanagar, the premises of the Male Mahadeshwara temple was adorned with special flowers and decorative lights.

Devotees from far-flung areas visited the temple along with Usha, wife of Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and other prominent personalities.

Salur Mutt authorities also arranged free meals for over 50,000 devotees.

Temple authorities also installed a huge platform at the Srikanteshwara temple in Nanjangud cultural activities, including bhajans as part of Mahashivarathri Jagaran.

Similarly, people thronged to various temples across Bengaluru to celebrate the festival. *—Salar News*



Devotees offer pooja on Mahashivaratri at a Shiva Temple on old Airport Road, in Bengaluru, on Sunday ***PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD***

China allegedly expanding its nuclear sites

BEIJING, 15 FEB

New satellite pics reveals extensive upgrades at China's nuclear sites, including Zitong in Sichuan Province, where new bunkers, reinforced ramparts and secured structures have been added. According to The New York Times, a recently built complex shows dense piping, likely for handling hazardous materials or testing high explosives needed for nuclear warheads. Nearby Pingtong province features double fencing and a 360-foot ventilation stack, with layouts consistent with plutonium "pit" production, the metal cores required for nuclear warheads. The Pentagon estimates China has 600 nuclear warheads, which could potentially reach to 1,000 by 2030, raising concerns over its expanding arsenal. *—AGENCIES*

—ANI

Uddhav's son Tejas hospitalised in Mumbai

MUMBAI, 15 FEB

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray's younger son Tejas, a zoologist, has been admitted to a hospital here due to fever, a party functionary said on Sunday. Tejas is recovering well and is likely to be discharged soon, he said. He was admitted to the private hospital three days ago due to fever, the functionary said. Tejas heads the Thackeray Wildlife Foundation, which is credited with discovering several species, mostly in the Western Ghats. Former Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray's elder son, Aaditya Thackeray, is an MLA from Worli in Mumbai and a former state minister. *—PTI*

UP man held for offensive remarks against Modi

MUZAFFARNAGAR, 15 FEB

A 22-year-old man was arrested here for posting a video on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in which objectionable remarks were purportedly made against him, police said on Sunday. Charthawal police station SHO Satyanarayan Dahiya told reporters that the accused has been identified as Jitendra Kumar Kashyap. Dahiya said that police have registered a case against Kashyap under Sections 352 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace) and 353 (statements conducing to public mischief) of BNS and arrested him. According to the police, they made the arrest on Saturday evening after the video of the prime minister went viral on social media. *—PTI*

Three militants arrested in Manipur

IMPHAL, 15 FEB

Three militants, including two women, belonging to different banned organisations have been arrested in Tengnoupal and Imphal East districts of Manipur, police said on Sunday. The arrests were made in Tengnoupal and Imphal East districts on Saturday, a police statement said. Security forces arrested two women cadres of the banned outfit People's Liberation Army (PLA) from the vicinity of Sunrise Ground in Tengnoupal district. They have been identified as Akoijam Sakhenbi, 23 and Chongtham Hembaby, 17. A militant belonging to the banned PREPAK (PRO) outfit was arrested from Napetpalli in Imphal East district. He has been identified as Ingudam Ingocha Singh, 50, and a .32 pistol loaded with five cartridges has been seized from his possession. Meanwhile, security forces seized a 10 kg IED near Sijang Kuki village in Churachandpur district on Friday. It was safely defused by the bomb disposal team, it added. *—PTI*

Deals betray farmers: RaGa; they are protected: Shah

Shah says Rahul is spreading lies on deals with US, UK, EU

NEW DELHI/ GANDHINAGAR, 15 FEB

LoP in Lok Sabha and Congress Leader Rahul Gandhi; Union Home Minister Amit Shah *—PTI/WIKICOMMONS*

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah asserted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government ensured full protection of farmers' interests in every agreement.

Upping the ante against the government over the India-US interim trade deal, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday alleged that "we are witnessing a betrayal" of Indian farmers.

Meanwhile, Union Home Minister Amit Shah accused Congress leader Rahul Gandhi of spreading "lies" and misleading farmers over India's trade pacts with the US, UK and the EU.

Gandhi posed a string of questions to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Gandhi, who has been attacking the government and accusing it of a sell-out through the deal, said this issue concerns the future and asked whether India is allowing another country to gain a long-term hold over India's agriculture industry.

"In the name of a US trade deal, we are witnessing a betrayal of Indian farmers," the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said in his post in Hindi on X.

Posing questions to the prime minister, Gandhi asked what it means to import Dried Distillers' Grains (DDG). "Does it mean that Indian cattle will be fed distillers' grains made from GM American corn? Won't this effectively make our milk products dependent on the US agricultural industry?" he questioned.

Gandhi further inquired that if India allows the import of GM soy oil, what would its implications be on soy farmers in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and across the country? "How will they withstand another price shock?" he asked.

Meanwhile, Shah asserted that the government has fully safeguarded the country's agriculture and dairy sectors.

He termed as "laughable" the Congress's allegations that trade agreements would harm Indian farmers.

"I feel like laughing when Congress's Shahzada Rahul Gandhi stands in Parliament and talks about protecting farmers. The Congress has a long history of misleading the country and now they are spreading lies about trade deals," Shah said.

He was addressing a gathering in Gandhinagar after launching India's first Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)-based Public Distribution System.

He asserted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government ensured full protection of farmers' interests in every agreement. *—PTI*

BUDGET 2ND PART 'INTERESTING'

Voting on motion to remove Birla on 9 March: Rijiju

TAWANG/PANAJI, 15 FEB

The debate and subsequent vote on the no-confidence motion moved by the opposition against Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla will be taken up on 9 March, when the House reassembles after the recess, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister **Kiren Rijiju** said here on Sunday.

Rijiju stated that the second part of the Budget Session, scheduled from 9 March to 2 April, will be "interesting" as several "important" legislations and a "critical" bill will be presented in Parliament for debate and passage.

He warned that if Opposition parties continue their protests as they did during the first part of the session, it would ultimately be detrimental to them.

Hinting at a crack in the opposition unity, Rijiju said the Trinamool Congress did not sign the no-confidence motion against the speaker.

Rijiju, who is on a visit to his Lok Sabha constituency, Arunachal West, mentioned that during the second part of the session, the government plans to identify specific ministries for discussions.

GOA CONG EYES TIE-UP WITH GFP FOR POLLS

The Congress has signalled an alliance with the Goa Forward Party (GFP) for the 2027 assembly elections, asserting the combine would form the next government in the coastal state.

Goa Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC) president Amit Patkar made a statement regarding the alliance at the Carnival 2026 festivities in Fartoda on Saturday.

Carnival 2026 is being held at multiple locations in the coastal state since Friday and will culminate on 17 February. *—PTI*

All we seek is respect: TN Cong MP on seat-sharing

MADURAI/CHENNAI, 15 FEB

- Senior Congress functionary Praveen Chakravarty on Sunday took a swipe at the ruling DMK's flagship women's assistance scheme.

Congress MP Manickam Tagore on Sunday said his party expected the DMK to treat it with respect within the alliance, amid growing friction over recent remarks made by DMK leaders on power-sharing in the state.

"We hope we will be treated well. Rahul Gandhi treats DMK Chief MK Stalin like his brother," he said.

On 25 January, DMK MLA G Thalapathy of Madurai North said he was "pained" that two Congress MPs had raised the issue of power-sharing despite not being concerned about the Assembly elections.

His comments drew criticism from Selvaperunthagai.

Referring to discussions within his party, Tagore said Congress workers expressed anguish at the South District Committee meeting today over the comments by DMK functionaries.

"Just as we treat you with respect, we expect you to reciprocate," he added.

Senior Congress functionary Praveen Chakravarty on Sunday took a swipe at the ruling DMK's flagship women's assistance scheme.

He said five out of nine ruling parties that launched similar schemes lost elections in the past three years, including Congress, which was defeated in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh in 2023 despite its welfare initiatives.

The power-sharing issue has become a thorn in longtime allies DMK and Congress's ties. *—PTI*

BJP, Cong clash in Pune over Shivaji-Tipu remark

MUMBAI/PUNE, 15 FEB

In Pune, BJP workers clashed on Saturday with Congress activists on Sunday while protesting Congress leader **Harshwardhan Sapkal**'s remarks comparing Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj to Tipu Sultan.

Earlier in the day, Maharashtra's Congress leader Sachin Sawant accused BJP of "double standards" and pursuing a polarisation agenda after Sapkal faced criticism for the remark.

A controversy erupted over a portrait of Tipu Sultan in the office of Malegaon Municipal Corporation deputy mayor Shan-e-Hind Nihal Ahmed, which was opposed by Shiv Sena corporators and Hindu outfits.

In a statement, the Congress spokesperson cited several instances to claim that B JP leaders had earlier supported or endorsed references to Mysuru ruler Tipu Sultan in public spaces and forums.

He referred to resolutions in civic bodies in Akola and Mumbai, as well as instances where BJP leaders had allegedly praised the historical figure, to argue that the party's current Opposition was politically motivated. *—PTI*

Bhiwandi ex-mayor held in fraud case

THANE, 15 FEB

The head of a local party with four corporators was arrested Saturday in an alleged fraud case, just days before the mayoral election in the Bhiwandi-Nizampur Municipal Corporation in Thane district scheduled for 20 February.

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Thane police took former mayor **Vilas Raghunath Patil**, chief of the Konark Vikas Party (KVA), into custody for his alleged involvement in a 2025 financial fraud case. He is accused of cheating people on the pretext of providing them with houses.

Following his arrest, Patil was produced in a Bhiwandi court, which remanded him in police custody for four days, an EOW official said.

The recent election to the 90-member Bhiwandi-Nizampur civic body threw up a fractured verdict, with the Congress emerging as the single-largest party with 30 seats, followed by the BJP (22), Shiv Sena (12), NCP (SP) (12), Samajwadi Party (6), Patil's KVA (4), and Bhiwandi Vikas Aghadi (3). One Independent candidate also won. *—PTI*

Stray dog in Parl: Renuka served privilege notice

NEW DELHI, 15 FEB

Congress Rajya Sabha MP Renuka Chowdhury has been served a privilege notice for allegedly breaching rules by bringing a stray dog into Parliament and making derogatory remarks about MPs.

The Committee of Privileges has asked her to respond by 23 February. Chowdhury had brought a rescued stray in her car during the Winter session on 1 December, prompting objections from some members.

She reportedly said, "those sitting inside bite, dogs don't," in response to the objections. BJP MPs Brij Lal and Indu Bala Goswami submitted a breach of privilege notice, claiming her comments demean MPs and violate security protocols. They urged strict action to protect Parliament's dignity. Chowdhury's office stated they will respond per parliamentary procedures, upholding democratic principles.

She is a dog lover and had claimed that her driver intended to take the rescued dog to a veterinarian. When reporters asked about the privilege motion, she replied, "bhow bhow...what else should I say." *—PTI*

Got India's commitment to stop buying Russian oil, says Rubio

MUNICH, 15 FEB

- US President Donald Trump, while announcing a trade deal with New Delhi early in February, claimed India had agreed to not procure crude oil from Russia.

US Secretary of State **Marco Rubio** has said that India has committed to stop buying Russian oil, days after New Delhi reiterated that "national interests" will be the "guiding factor" for India's energy procurement.

US President Donald Trump, while announcing a trade deal with New Delhi early in February, claimed India had agreed to not procure crude oil from Russia.

Since then, the US has claimed multiple times that India will stop buying oil from Russia.

Speaking at the Munich Security Conference on Saturday, Rubio said, "In our conversations with India, we've gotten their commitment to stop buying additional Russian oil."

Rubio was responding to a question on the Russia-Ukraine war and the sanctions imposed on Moscow.

After announcing the deal, in an executive order, Trump rolled back an additional 25 per cent tariffs on India that he imposed in August last for India's procurement of crude oil from Russia.

Earlier, India had said that it would maintain multiple sources for crude oil purchases and diversify them to ensure stability in the supply chain, with national interests remaining the "guiding factor" for the procurement, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said this week. *—PTI*

A FIGHT FOR FAIR PLAY

After small hiatus, Sabarimala women's entry issue resurfaces

T'PURAM, 15 FEB

Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha Temple in Pathanamthitta, Kerala *—PTI*

After a brief hiatus, the women's entry issue at the Sabarimala temple resurfaced on Sunday, sparking a political debate in Kerala, with the opposition urging the LDF government to clarify its stand on the entry of young women into the shrine.

The issue sparked a fresh war of words between leaders of the ruling CPI(M) and the opposition Congress in the poll-bound state, as the Supreme Court is reportedly scheduled to consider on Monday the review and writ petitions related to its 2018 verdict permitting the entry of women of all ages into the Lord Ayyappa temple.

While the Congress urged Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to announce the government's stand before the apex court, the CPI(M) said it could not disclose what the government would submit in court.

Speaking to reporters in Kochi, Leader of the Opposition VD Satheesan demanded that Vijayan clarify whether the Kerala government would stand by the affidavit it had earlier filed in the Supreme Court in the Sabarimala women's entry case or withdraw it.

With the apex court scheduled to consider the review and writ petitions on Monday, Satheesan questioned whether the government still supports women's entry. He accused the Left government of adopting an "ambiguous approach" on the issue.

"If the government continues to support women's entry, it should firmly stand by its affidavit. If it does not, the affidavit must be withdrawn. There has to be a clear position," he said. *—PTI*

Sitharaman holds key bilateral meetings in Munich

MUNICH, 15 FEB

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman met Christine Lagarde, President of the European Central Bank (ECB), in Munich, Germany, among several other key dignitaries, during her ongoing visit.

Both leaders were pleased to note the finalisation of the India and the European Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in January 2026. The Union Finance Minister underlined the financial role the ECB can play in facilitating trade under the EU-India FTA deal.

She also met Brigitte Haas, Prime Minister of Liechtenstein, & Alois Philipp Maria, HSH Hereditary Prince Alois of Liechtenstein.

She apprised them of investment opportunities through the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund, the International Financial Services Centres Authority as the financial gateway to India, and the broader prospects within India's manufacturing sector. *—ANI*

Assam seeks more ELFs, Shah likely to visit: Himanta

GUWAHATI, 15 FEB

Assam Chief Minister **Himanta Biswa Sarma** on Sunday said he has written to the Centre seeking more emergency landing facilities (ELF) in the state, a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Northeast's first ELF in Moran.

He also announced that the Assam government will ink a pact with the Civil Aviation Ministry next month to carry out a feasibility study to construct four more airports at Majuli, Diphu, Umrangso and Manas.

Addressing a press conference here, Sarma said more strategic assets are being planned, including a twin tube road-cum-rail tunnel under the Brahmaputra river and an underground highway underneath the Chicken's Neck corridor.

"The Moran ELF has extreme strategic importance for Assam and the Northeast. The PM inaugurating it in the presence of the Air Chief Marshal yesterday has sent a very strong message that India is ready for everything on this front," he said. A lot of highway and other strategic projects are being constructed in Arunachal Pradesh, considering its border with China, but "Assam is being developed as a backup state in case of a war", Sarma said.

Meanwhile, Union Home Minister Amit Shah is likely to visit Assam on a two-day tour from February 20 to roll out a programme and take part in a CRPF parade, Sarma said on Sunday.

Sarma said Shah will start his tour from Silchar in Cachar district of Barak valley, where he will launch the scheme under the second phase of the Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP). *—PTI*

—PTI

Retired judge to head Meghalaya mine blast probe

SHILLONG, 15 FEB

Retired High Court judge Justice RS Chauhan will head a three-member judicial panel to investigate the 5 February blast at an illegal coal mine in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills, which resulted in 31 deaths. The panel, including retired IPS officer H Nongpluh and ex-IAS officer PS Dkhar, is tasked with fixing accountability and examining constitutional exemptions to mining laws. Justice Chauhan, former Chief Justice of Uttarakhand and Telangana High Courts, will conduct an inquiry into the explosion in Mynsngat village. The commission will submit its report within six months. —*PTI*

Odisha man sells infant son for Rs 1 lakh, 2 held

BALASORE, 15 FEB

Odisha police have rescued a two-and-a-half-year-old boy who was allegedly sold by his father to a man for Rs 1 lakh, officials said. Both the seller and the buyer have been detained. The incident, which took place in the Barisahi village in Nilgiri Notified Area Council area, came to light after a video purportedly showing the father bargaining with a prospective buyer went viral on social media. A local activist subsequently lodged a complaint at Nilgiri police station. "The baby was rescued from Chiminibhati area and handed over to the child welfare committee," Nilgiri Subdivisional Police Officer Pramod Kumar Mallick said. Police identified the father as Rakesh Kumar Behera alias Kua, a mason, who allegedly received Rs 50,000 as the first instalment. Behera claimed financial hardship for selling the baby. —*PTI*

DJ operator slain in celebratory firing at UP wedding

GORAKHPUR, 15 FEB

An 18-year-old DJ operator, Chhotu, was killed during a wedding procession in Gagaha, allegedly due to celebratory firing. The incident occurred near Baba Baleshwar Nath temple, where shots were fired into the air by a youth accompanying the groom's 'baraat'. One bullet hit Chhotu in the head, killing him instantly. The crowd dispersed after the shooting, but the wedding proceeded. Police have detained some individuals for questioning, examined CCTV footage, and c onfirmed the death resulted from celebratory firing. —*PTI*

—ANI

State funeral for Kerala's youngest organ donor

PATHANAMTHITTA, 15 FEB

Kerala bid farewell to a 10-month-old girl who became the state's youngest organ donor after her parents consented to donate her organs following her brain death. She was laid to rest with state honours at Mallappally on Sunday. Ministers and people from across the state reached the residence of Aalin Sherin Abraham to pay their respects after her body was brought home this morning. Aalin was injured in an accident on 5 February 5 while travelling with her mother and grandparents at Pallam near Kottayam. She was the daughter of Arun Abraham and Sherin John, residents of Mallappally in Pathanamthitta district. Despite intensive treatment, doctors confirmed that she was brain dead on 12 February. — *PTI*

Terror 'mule account' network busted in J&K

Around 8,000 mule bank accounts in the area frozen

NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR, 15 FEB

Security agencies busted an ever-growing network of "mule accounts" in Jammu and Kashmir that serves as the financial backbone of global scam networks, with officials fearing that the funds routed through these accounts could be used for anti-national activities.

The officials said around 8,000 mule accounts operating in the region have been identified and frozen in the last three years, exposing a sophisticated network of money laundering.

They described these accounts as the "weakest yet most crucial link" in the cybercrime chain, as without them, the conversion of stolen money into untraceable cryptocurrency would be impossible.

Central agencies have asked the J&K police to hold consultations with banks to curb the mushrooming of 'mule accounts.'

Officials suspect that after the National Investigation Agency's 2017 crackdown on the flow of illicit money into J&K, anti-national elements may have shifted to a newer model of "digital hawala," in which commissions earned by mule account holders may be used for activities against the country.

A muler is typically not the person who contacts victims or sends fake links. Instead, their role is covert but critical, that is, arranging and maintaining a steady supply of mule accounts that scammers use to receive and transfer stolen money.

These mule accounts often belong to ordinary people lured with promises of "easy commission."

Sometimes, bank accounts are opened in the name of fictitious companies, enabling large transactions of up to Rs 40 lakh in a single day without raising alarms.

A study done by security agencies has found people in China, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Cambodia directing people in J&K to create private crypto wallets, which are often set up using a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to avoid detection and require no KYC verification. — *PTI*

A soldier on duty in Srinagar —*PTI*

M'rashtra ATS conducts raids in two districts

MUMBAI, 15 FEB

The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) has launched a massive search in Yavatmal and Ahilyanagar districts, and has detained several suspects following a tip-off about terror-linked activities, officials said on Sunday.The ATS combed around 20 locations in the two districts and has rounded up a dozen suspects, they said.

Based on intelligence about the radicalisation of youths in the state, the ATS, along with police teams, launched operations in Pusad and Umarkhed cities in Yavatmal.

Searches are underway at 14 locations, including homes, offices, and other places connected to the suspects, the official said, adding that the teams have seized objectionable documents, mobile phones, electronic gadgets, and CCTV footage.

The ATS has recovered incriminating documents during the searches. — *PTI*

J&K WHITE COLLAR TERROR

Docs set up 'Ansar Interim' group to carry out attacks

NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR, 15 FEB

The 'white-collar' terror module recently busted by the J&K police indicates that the doctors arrested in the case had been radicalised since 2016 and had formed a terror organisation named "Ansar Interim" to carry out attacks in the UT as well as in the hinterland, officials said on Sunday.

The case, which is now being probed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), also brought to light that Dr Umer-un Nabi, the man behind the wheel of the explosive-laden car that exploded outside the Red Fort on 10 November killing over a dozen people, had unsuccessfully attempted to join terror groups in 2016 and 2018.

Piecing together evidence gathered so far, officials said the accused doctors, Muzamil Gannie, Umer-un Nabi (now dead), and Adeel Rather, along with his brother Muzzafar Rather (absconding), as well as Maulvi Irfan, Qari Aamir, and Tufail Gazi met at the Eidgah in Srinagar in April 2022.

During the meeting, they decided to form a terror organisation "Ansar Interim," with Adeel named as the 'Ameer' (chief) of the group, Maulvi Irfan as 'Deputy Ameer,' and Gannie as treasurer, officials said, adding that among militant groups, "Ansar" is commonly associated with the globally banned terror outfit Al-Qaeda.

The arrested doctors and preachers told the interrogators that the need to form a new group emerged because all their contacts with active terrorists had been severed, officials said. — *PTI*

- The arrested doctors and preachers told the interrogators that the need to form a new group emerged because all their contacts with terrorists had been severed

AI crash: Italian report blaming pilot rejected

SANGLI, 15 FEB

Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol has refuted a foreign media report about the probe into the Air India plane crash in Ahmedabad last year, stating that the investigation is still going on.

An Italian daily had claimed that agencies probing the crash had blamed the pilots in their report.

"I just want to inform you all that our investigation agencies are probing the matter. Have faith in our agencies. They are working on it," Mohol said here on Saturday. "Once the report is finalised, then only it will be justifiable to comment on it," he added.

In one of the worst aircraft accidents in India, 260 persons, including 241 passengers, died after Air India's Boeing 787-8 aircraft operating flight AI171 to London Gatwick crashed soon after take-off from Ahmedabad on 12 June 2025.

On Thursday, the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) said the probe was still in progress and no final conclusions have been reached.

It said media reports suggesting that the investigation into the accident has been finalised are "incorrect and speculative." — *PTI*

summet sabharwal —*PTI*

BRIDGE PARAPET COLLAPSE

Mumbai Metro death: Shinde suspends executive engineer

MUMBAI, 15 FEB

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Saturday ordered the suspension of an executive engineer following an accident at a Metro site in the Mulund area of Mumbai.

A man died and three others were injured after a parapet segment of a bridge of the under-construction Metro Rail Line 4 collapsed on passing vehicles.

Shinde ordered suspension of executive engineer Satyajit Salve in connection with the accident, officials said.

Shinde said the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) will bear the medical expenses of the injured. After holding a meeting with Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority officials, Shinde warned that no leniency would be shown to officers endangering public safety. — *PTI*

Vehicles destroyed in the accident that happened on Saturday —*PTI*

Canada distributor refunds tickets of 'Jana Nayagan'

CHENNAI, 15 FEB

Canada-based York Cinemas announced the invalidation of all advance tickets for the film 'Jana Nayagan,' stating that the film is not likely to be released before April 30.

In a statement issued via its social media handles, the cinema management directed customers to ensure their refunds are processed.

"If you have any pending tickets and your refund has not yet been processed, kindly contact our theatres to have it arranged," read the notification posted on its official X handle.

However, York Cinemas promised VIP membership holders priority booking access once the new release date is confirmed.

Incidentally, on 12 February, the theatre had allowed the VIP members to retain their tickets while urging others to get refund processed by Sunday.

According to the website of the York Cinemas, based in Ontario which primarily exhibits Indian films, VIP Membership was sold for Canadian Dollar 89.99, promising priority access to 'Jana Nayagan' FDFS.

'Jana Nayagan', which was supposed to have been released worldwide on 9 January as part of the Pongal line-up, was delayed due to a deadlock with the CBFC. The film was originally submitted in December 2025 for certification. While an initial committee suggested a "U/A" certificate with minor cuts, the process stalled after complaints were filed. These complaints alleged that the film contains scenes that hurt religious sentiments and misused armed forces emblems. — *PTI*

AWARD-WINNING FARMER ENDS LIFE OVER DEBTS IN KERALA

KANNUR, 15 FEB

A 62-year-old award-winning farmer allegedly committed suicide due to debts at Cherupuzha here, police said. The deceased, Ambattu Elias, was a native of Cherupuzha.

Family sources said he consumed pesticide and was found critical at his farm three days ago.

Elias had been undergoing treatment at a private hospital, where he later died. Debts running into lakhs are suspected to have driven him to take the extreme step.

Elias had been cultivating vegetables on leased land for four decades in Kannur and Kasaragod districts. He had planted around 2,500 banana saplings this season also, but his income did not match expenses. — *PTI*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support

Delhi biker's death: Family holds protest, demands justice

NEW DELHI, 15 FEB

The family of a 25-year-old man who died after falling into a pit dug by the Delhi Jal Board held a protest on Sunday at the incident site in Janakpuri, demanding justice, compensation and action against those responsible.

Kamal Dhyani, a bank employee, fell into a 15-foot-deep pit on the night of 5 February. His family has alleged that there were no barricades at the excavation site. "A man lost his life, and the family must get justice," Kamal Dhyani's uncle, whose name is also Kamal Dhyani, said. — *PTI*

CISF inspectors flag just 1 promotion in 34 years

NEW DELHI, 15 FEB

A group of more than 500 Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) inspectors have sought a "fair" cadre review, citing unprecedented stagnation that leaves most with just one promotion in 30–34 years.

The petition follows a favourable Supreme Court order issued on 2 February, which disposed of their special leave petition (SLP) and directed that the cadre review for the CISF be completed within three months.

PTI has seen multiple communications sent by these officials to their headquarters. The petitioners said the stagnation was at the inspector level to the assistant commandant (AC) rank, the entry-level gazetted officer position.

Currently, there are around 3,000 inspectors and approximately 17,000 sub-inspectors in the force.

Inspectors said they face "extraordinary" career stagnation, with many receiving just one promotion in over 30 years of "unblemished" service, leading to low morale.

The Central Industrial Security Force, a 200,000-strong unit under the Union Home Ministry, guards power, nuclear and aerospace facilities, and provides counter-terror cover for Parliament and major airports. — *PTI*

AI TRAINING FOR 6 LAKH ADULTS

Kerala launches massive AI literacy drive for parents

THIRU'PURAM, 15 FEB

The Kerala Infrastructure and Technology for Education (KITE), has launched an artificial intelligence literacy drive for adults.

Titled 'Sarvam AI Mayam' (AI is Everywhere), the initiative is considered as the largest artificial intelligence awareness programme to be implemented in the country.

Under the initiative, students of the Little KITEs IT clubs will provide AI training to 6 lakh parents through the state's schools.

The programme, which is scheduled to run until 30 June 2026, is being implemented across 2,200 Little KITEs units, with each unit training an average of 300 parents, it said.

K Anvar Sadath, the CEO of KITE, said the initiative begins with a simplified introduction to Machine Learning, the technology that allows machines to process data and make decisions.

Parents are shown videos where the classic paintings of Raja Ravi Varma are brought to life through animation to illustrate the creative power of AI. The sessions focus heavily on the practical use of AI in daily life via smartphones.

"Parents are trained to use AI-powered tools to identify birds and plants or to translate signboards from other languages, such as Tamil, into Malayalam in real-time."

The module demonstrates how AI can be used for photo restoration to preserve old family photographs. The curriculum includes techniques for identifying AI-generated deepfake videos, forged images, and cloned voices.

Parents are also introduced to 'Samagra Plus Learning Room,' an AI-based educational platform developed by KITE to help them support their children's studies. — *PTI*

Dead 6-year-old Kochi girl was sexually abused

KOCHI, 15 FEB

The investigation into the deaths of a girl and her father in Kochi's Elamakkara was intensified after an autopsy revealed the child had been sexually assaulted before her death.

On 16 January, the girl was allegedly poisoned before her father died by suicide at the rented house here.

The autopsy report revealed that the deceased child was allegedly sexually assaulted for the past one year.

The child's mother said that the family was unaware of any such incident and that there had been a quarrel over a financial matter with her husband on the day the deaths occurred.

The police will record the statements of relatives and people close to the family. They will also speak to the teachers of the educational institution where the child was studying. CCTV footage is being examined to ascertain whether anyone had come to the house on the day the deaths had occurred. — PTI

Ex-SP leader held for smuggling cough syrup

LUCKNOW, 15 FEB

The Lucknow unit of the special task force (STF) has arrested a man in connection with the illegal storage and smuggling of codeine-laced cough syrup for intoxicating purposes.

The accused, Amit Yadav, a resident of Maidagin in Varanasi, was arrested on 14 February.

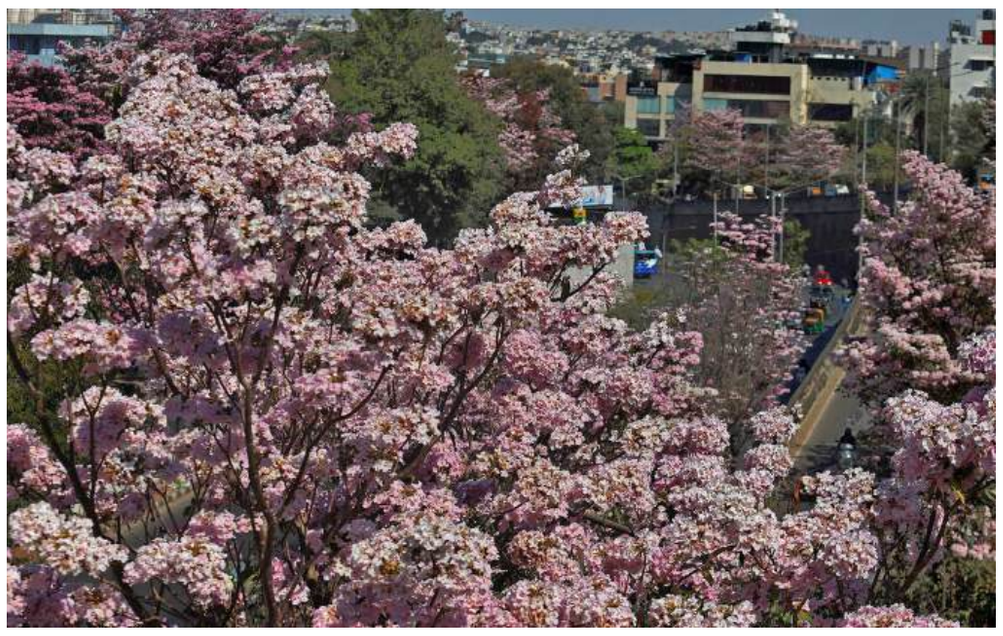
A case was registered against Yadav at the Sushant Golf City Police Station here.

During interrogation, Yadav revealed that he had earlier served as the president of the student union at the Harishchandra Postgraduate College in Varanasi, and was the state secretary of the Samajwadi Party's Yuvjan Sabha.

Amit had met Shubham Jaisal, the alleged kingpin of the cough syrup racket, while studying at Harishchandra College.

Amit purchased over 1,00,000 bottles of the cough syrup through his firm, GL Surgical at Shubham's behest. These were sold at higher prices by showing fake sales in the names of other firms. Amit also faces charges of rioting, attempted murder and fraud. — *PTI*

- Yadav revealed that he had earlier served as the president of the student union at the Harishchandra Postgraduate College in Varanasi, and was also the state secretary of the Samajwadi Party's Yuvjan Sabha



BENGALURU TURNS PINK

Pink Tabebuia rosea trees transforms Bengaluru's cityscape into a fleeting spring paradise
—*MOHAMMED ASAD*

OPPN VS SPEAKER

Nehru's call from 1954 to rise above party lines still echoes

When India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, rose in the Lok Sabha in December 1954 during a debate on a motion to remove Speaker GV Mavalankar, he delivered a message that continues to resonate in Parliament today: members, he said, were "not bound by any whip or any direction" and must decide the issue "regardless of party affiliations".

Nehru urged MPs to view the motion not through the prism of party politics but as a question concerning the dignity of the House itself. His intervention is back in focus as the Opposition has submitted a notice to move a resolution for the removal of current Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

The first such situation arose on 18 December, 1954, when the Opposition moved a resolution seeking Mavalankar's removal. The motion was admitted after 50 members stood in support, as required. Nehru also requested the Chair to allow more time to the Opposition to present its case.

The debate was fiery. Though weak in numbers, Opposition members sharply criticised Nehru and accused the Speaker of partisanship. Intervening, Nehru made it clear he was speaking "in my capacity and the high privilege of being the Leader of this House and not as a leader of the majority party".

"So far as this majority party is concerned," he said, "not one of them is bound by any whip or any direction: let them vote as they like. It is not a party matter." Each member, he stressed, must consider the issue independently because it affected not only the Speaker but "the high dignity of this House as Parliament".

Describing the matter as serious, Nehru said what was said or done about the Speaker "comes back on each one of us". He admitted that members might disagree with particular rulings or even feel irritated by them. "These things happen," he said. But challenging the bona fides of the Speaker was altogether different.

A file photo of the then Lok Sabha Speaker GV Mavalankar with India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru outside Parliament —*SCREENGRAB*

"When we challenge his bona fides, we betray before our countrymen and indeed before the world that we are little men," Nehru declared. Parliament, he warned, risked displaying itself as quarrelsome and frivolous if accusations were made without thought for their consequences.

He acknowledged that the Constitution provided for a motion against the Speaker and that no one denied the Opposition's legal right to move it. "The point is not the legal right but the propriety; the desirability of doing it," he said.

Responding to historical examples cited by Opposition members, including references to events in 17th-century England, Nehru said he listened "with amazement". India, he pointed out, was a mid-20th-century republic concerned with the honour of its own Parliament, not with medieval precedents in Britain. While India followed many practices of the British Parliament, even those were not governed by events centuries earlier.

After listening to speeches from the Opposition benches, Nehru described them as "an exhibition of incompetence, frivolity and lack of substance". He strongly defended Mavalankar and criticised the questioning of his integrity. With Congress commanding more than 360 seats, the motion was defeated by voice vote.

Two subsequent attempts to initiate removal proceedings against Speakers also failed.

In 1966, a resolution against Speaker Sardar Hukam Singh did not even advance, as it failed to secure the mandatory support of 50 members required to initiate the process.

On 15 April 1987, the Opposition moved a resolution for the removal of Speaker Balram Jakhar. During the debate, then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi quoted Nehru's 1954 remarks twice, invoking his grandfather's warning against questioning the bona fides of the Speaker. The motion was again defeated by voice vote.

More recently, in December 2024, Opposition members in the Rajya Sabha submitted a notice seeking the removal of Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar in his capacity as Chairman of the Upper House, alleging partisan conduct. The notice was rejected at the preliminary stage on procedural grounds. Now attention has turned once again to the Lok Sabha. A notice to move a resolution for the removal of Om Birla was submitted by Opposition members last Tuesday. According to sources, it will be listed after the second phase of the Budget session begins on 9 March. A speedy review is expected in accordance with parliamentary rules. As the House prepares to confront yet another such moment, Nehru's 1954 intervention remains a touchstone.

His insistence that members rise above party lines and consider the dignity of Parliament above all else offers a reminder that while the Constitution provides the mechanism for removal, the true test lies in the judgement and restraint of those who wield it. —*PTI*

SALAR ساہر

Budget shuns populism as it bets big on jobs, growth: PM

Calling productive spending a hallmark of his government, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the just unveiled Union Budget deliberately avoided short-term populism and instead channelled record capital outlays into infrastructure to drive jobs and sustainable growth.

In an exclusive interview with PTI, Modi said his government has used its years in office to plug "structural gaps left behind by earlier administrations", pursued bold reforms and laid the foundations for a developed India. He asserted that the latest Budget marks the "next level" of that journey.

Describing the Budget for fiscal year starting April 1 as reflective of his governance approach, Modi said the document "is a good reflection of our governance style and priorities".

"This Budget represents the next level in this journey, imparting momentum to our 'Reform Express.' It is designed to accelerate momentum and prepare our youth for the opportunities of a rapidly changing world," the prime minister told PTI.

He cited the pre-Budget Economic Survey to state that capital accumulation, labour formalisation, and digital public infrastructure together have elevated India' potential growth rate to 7 per cent.

"Productive spending has been a hallmark of our government. The high capital expenditure reflects our focus on infrastructure and capital investment, which are strong engines for long-term growth," he said in the written interview to PTI.

The FY27 Budget sharply scales up capital expenditure to Rs 12.2 lakh crore - a 5-times increase compared to 2013 - as the Modi government reinforces its strategy of prioritising infrastructure creation, logistics expansion and investment in sunrise sectors to drive long-term growth. It lays emphasis on spending on rail, roads, digital and energy infrastructure, alongside measures to ease compliance and improve credit flow as the central lever for job creation and economic momentum.

"This reflects a conscious strategic choice to invest in assets that create productivity, jobs, and future economic capacity rather than short-term populism. This shows that our focus is on improving the quality of life for the people, creating jobs for our youth and advancing the nation's progress towards Viksit Bharat," Modi said.

For a long time, the prime minister said, high-quality infrastructure had been neglected, posing a challenge for the people and Indian businesses.

"Broken and outdated infrastructure has no place in a nation that aspires to create a Viksit Bharat," he said.

"Therefore, we revolutionised the sector with our speed, scale and focus on creating next-gen infrastructure, while upgrading the existing infrastructure. In the last decade or so, India has seen perhaps the most expansive infrastructure-building effort in our history, an unprecedented emphasis on quality! The most important aspect of this has been the way we have created infrastructure with the future in mind."

Highlighting the scale of expansion, he said the number of airports has doubled as orders for thousands of aircraft are placed, number of cities with metro services has more than quadrupled, rural roads and internet connectivity are expanding rapidly, and investments made in the transformational expansion of freight corridors, ports, and coastal connectivity.

On sectoral allocations, he said a capital outlay of almost Rs 3 lakh crore has been made for Indian Railways, with a priority on high-speed connectivity, freight capacity, and passenger safety. Seven new high-speed rail corridors are proposed to be developed to connect major Indian cities, including the South High-Speed Diamond corridor, which will significantly benefit Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Puducherry.

At the same time, Dedicated Freight Corridors are being expanded to decongest passenger routes and reduce logistics costs for industry.

Allocations for national highways have increased nearly 500 per cent compared to a decade ago.

Highlighting investments in emerging sectors, Modi said investments are being made in sunrise sectors, including biopharma, semiconductors, electronics component manufacturing, rare earth corridors, and chemical parks. "These will provide a new impetus to jobs and investment while strengthening India's future."

Emphasising governance reforms, the prime minister said, "An important feature of this budget has been our continued stress on trust-based governance. Across sectors, ministries, and processes, we are massively reducing paperwork, decriminalising offences, and reducing compliance requirements. This is because we envisage the state as an enabler, and we trust the citizens. This will have a far deeper impact on people's lives than the numbers in typical budgets."

Modi said his government had built "an inclusive, tech-driven yet human-centric welfare architecture that reaches the last mile and leaves no one behind," with nation-building and economic strengthening as its guiding principles.

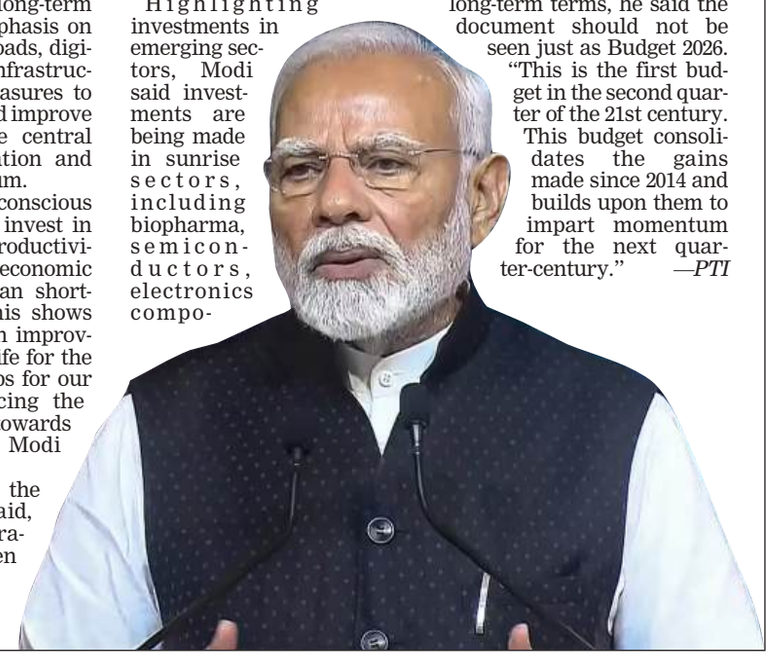
Recalling his call from the Red Fort - 'Yahi Samay Hai, Sahi Samay Hai' (now is the time, the right time) - Modi said the sense of urgency had now become a "national conviction".

"The 'now is the time' sense of purpose that you are alluding to has always been there within us. But today, that sense of urgency has become a national conviction, a whole-of-society resolve," he said.

Describing India's positioning in a changing global order, Modi said, "We are living in a post-pandemic world order that is opening new doors for India; countries eager to partner with us in trade and innovation, we have a young and increasingly skilled population; and we are focusing on strong growth accompanied by low inflation and macroeconomic stability."

Framing the Budget in long-term terms, he said the document should not be seen just as Budget 2026.

"This is the first budget in the second quarter of the 21st century. This budget consolidates the gains made since 2014 and builds upon them to impart momentum for the next quarter-century." —*PTI*



Prime Minister Narendra Modi—*PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

How silver screen stardom paved Vijay's political path

- Director Bharathan, who wrote dialogues for 'Ghilli' and 'Madhurey' and directed Vijay in 'Azhagiya Tamil Magan' and 'Bairavaa', describes him as highly observant and attuned to audience sensibilities.

"I'm gonna make him an offer he can't refuse." When Marlon Brando, as Don Vito Corleone, spoke these celebrated lines in the epic movie 'The Godfather', it was not a threat; it was the assertion of a man who has risen to a position of ultimate power, dictating the terms of reality for others.

It was such a dramatic rise in cinema, propelled by the love of millions of fans, that served as the real platform for Chandrasekar Joseph Vijay to start a political party and aspire to the office of Chief Minister. What lay behind Vijay's successful career and how did he build it?

Director Bharathan, who wrote dialogues for 'Ghilli' and 'Madhurey' and directed Vijay in 'Azhagiya Tamil Magan' and 'Bairavaa', describes him as highly observant and attuned to audience sensibilities.

"He listens completely, switches off his phone, and absorbs the story with sincerity," Bharathan says. "Many artistes don't do this. He instinctively understands the pulse of the audience."

From 'Thotta Petta' in 'Vishnu' (1995) to 'Whistle Podu' in 'GOAT' (2024), songs and dance sequences have been central to Vijay's mass appeal. He treats them not as standalone numbers but as extensions of performance, carefully aligning choreography, dialogue inflection, and emotional beats to create moments that connect with the audience. Bharathan says this instinctive understanding of what clicks with viewers has helped Vijay forge an unusually strong connect, one that has translated with remarkable consistency into box-office success.

In hindsight, the symbolism is hard to miss: few could have imagined that 'Whistle Podu', once a cinematic refrain, would later emerge as the official symbol of his political party, Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam, for the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections.

Over the years, Vijay emerged as a reliable box-office draw, eventually earning the title "Thalapathy", meaning Commander—a sobriquet also associated with M. K. Stalin. While 'Rasigan' (1994) formally introduced him as "Ilaya Thalapathy" (Young Commander), 'Poove Unakkaga' (1996) brought him widespread recognition. His early roles often cast him as an awkward young man, relying on humour and innuendo.

Films such as 'Coimbatore Mappillai' (1996), 'Kadhalukku Mariyadhai' (1997), and 'Once More' (1997) marked his transition to a family-friendly romantic lead with comic flair. By 'Thulladha Manamum Thullum' (1999), he displayed a depth that signalled his readiness for more demanding roles.

After his 2023 hit 'Leo', Vijay could have demanded fees exceeding Rs 100 crore per film, but chose to step into politics instead —*PTI*

He went on to headline a string of romantic dramas—including 'Kannukkul Nilavu' (2000), 'Priyamaanavale' (2000), and 'Shahjahan' (2001)—before steadily repositioning himself as an action-led star, mirroring a broader industry shift. Vijay's evolution continued with 'Kushi' (2000), 'Friends' (2001), and 'Thirumalai' (2003), reflecting his growing versatility.

Post 'Ghilli' (2004), he became increasingly selective, defining the commercial hero archetype with 'Madhurey' (2004), 'Thirupaachi' (2005), and 'Sivakasi' (2005). 'Pokkiri' (2007) cemented his stardom, delivering both massive box-office returns and critical acclaim.

An industry PR told PTI that 80 per cent of star-driven films were produced on Minimum Guarantee (MG) terms amid fierce competition for screens. "Back then, Vijay was like MGR, producers who backed his films were guaranteed profits," he said, invoking MG Ramachandran.

Despite his towering success, Vijay has always prioritised audience response over awards. Offscreen, he is reserved; on camera, he dominates. Now, in his political avatar, he has attempted a kind of redo of his film persona in real-life politics, making often innovative changes.

After 'Pokkiri', when his career faced turbulence, the 2012 flick 'Nanban', directed by S. Shankar, restored Vijay's position as one of Tamil cinema's leading stars. Facing speculation that his appeal was fading, he chose films that broke from the masala formula, revealing a more layered screen persona. Hits like 'Thuppakki' (2012), 'Thalaivaa' (2013), 'Jilla' (2014), 'Kaththi' (2014), 'Theri' (2016), and 'Mersal' (2017) reestablished his box-office dominance while engaging with social and political themes.

'Thalaivaa' clearly hinted at his political ambitions, and subsequent films consistently explored political issues. Even 'Sarkar' (2018), which followed 'Mersal', was politically charged. His speeches at audio launches became events in themselves. The bigger the film, the bigger he became as a star.

With 'Bigil' (2019), his third collaboration with Atlee, Vijay further connected with audiences as both entertainer and influential figure, extending his impact beyond the silver screen. Observers note that when he chooses films, one can almost see his intent: he wants audiences to see him as the ideal brother, friend, and leader—a calculated evolution reflecting his growth over decades.

Subsequent hits including 'Master' (2021) solidified his status as an undisputed box-office king. Vijay's meteoric rise, sustained through films such as the 2023 hit 'Leo', has been defined by rare consistency at the box office, a run many describe as near-fairy-tale. He stepped into politics at such a peak, when he could command a fee exceeding Rs 100 crore per film, according to observers. —*PTI*

— IANS

BLA gives Pak 7 days for prisoner exchange deadline

BALOCHISTAN, 15 FEB

The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) has issued a seven-day deadline for Pakistan to show readiness for a prisoner exchange, according to a statement from Hakkal, its media wing. The BLA claims to have detained 17 Pakistani security personnel during "Operation Herof," releasing ten, mostly ethnic Baloch connected to local policing, while holding seven. The remaining detainees, described as Pakistan Army soldiers, faced charges including actions against civilians, enforced disappearances, and genocide, in a Baloch National Court hearing. The group states that, if Pakistan demonstrates willingness within a week, the seven prisoners could be exchanged for Baloch detainees. No official response has been received, and verification remains difficult. —*ANI*

'US presses Kyiv, spares Moscow'

Zelenskyy seeks 20-year US security guarantee before peace deal

MUNICH, 15 FEB

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Ukraine, and not Russia was being asked "too often" to make concessions. Speaking at the Munich Security Conference in Germany on Saturday, Zelenskyy said he was hopeful about the upcoming peace negotiations, but said that Ukraine needed the security guarantees to last for at least 20 years before it could agree to a deal.

"The Americans often return to the topic of concessions, and too often those concessions are discussed in the context of Ukraine and not Russia," he said.

"It would be an illusion to believe that this war can now be reliably ended by dividing Ukraine – just as it was an illusion to believe that sacrificing Czechoslovakia would save Europe from a great war," he added.

Zelenskyy also described Russian President Vladimir Putin as a "slave of war".

"There is not a single power plant left in Ukraine that has not been damaged by Russian attacks," Zelensky said. "Not one."

Zelenskyy added that he hoped the trilateral talks in Geneva on Tuesday and Wednesday "will be serious, substantive" and "helpful for all of us".

Previous US-led efforts to find consensus on ending the war, most recently two rounds of talks in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, have failed to resolve difficult issues, such as the future of Ukraine's Donbas industrial heartland that is largely occupied by Russian forces.

Later while speaking to reporters, Zelenskyy questioned how the concept of a free trade zone — as proposed by the US — would work in the Donbas region which Russia insists Kyiv must give up in order to get peace.

President Zelenskyy further questioned what would happen if Putin provoked a foreign soldier within the region. —*Agencies*

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy speaking at the Munich Security Conference in Germany On Saturday —*PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE*

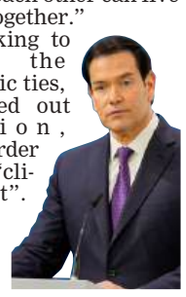
Europe not in crisis: EU hits back at Rubio

MUNICH, 15 FEB

Europe is not facing a civilisation crisis, EU's Foreign Policy Chief Kaja Kallas said at the Munich Security Conference in rebuttal to US Secretary Marco Rubio.

"Contrary to what some may say Europe is not facing civilisational erasure," she said, noting that many countries still "want to join our club" pointing to Canada.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said on Saturday that Europe must defend "the vibrant and diverse societies , showing that people who look different to each other can live peacefully together."



While seeking to rebuild the trans-Atlantic ties, Rubio lashed out migration, Europe's border policy and "climate cult". —*Agencies*

— PTI

Venezuelans launch hunger strike for prisoners

CARACAS, 15 FEB

Relatives of jailed Venezuelan dissidents began a hunger strike on Saturday and have camped outside the Zona 7 detention center in Caracas, since 8 January. They are pressing for their loved ones' release as lawmakers debate an amnesty bill for those imprisoned under former president Nicolas Maduro. The Committee for the Freedom of Political Prisoners said the 10 people are taking part of the hunger strike, which would last until the government frees all 33 political prisoners held at Zona 7. Earlier on Saturday, 17 prisoners were released from Zona 7 and reunited with their loved ones and families. —*PTI*

NEW MEMBERS OF PARLIMENT

Bangladesh cabinet to take oath on Tuesday

DHAKA, 15 FEB

Bangladesh's newly elected Members of Parliament are set to take their oaths on Tuesday morning, with the cabinet of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chairman **Tarique Rahman** to be sworn in that evening.

Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin will administer the oath, while President Mohammed Shahabuddin will also be sworn in.

Political debates have intensified following announcements by Shishir Monir, a defeated candidate of Jamaat-e-Islami, and Asif Mahmud Sajeeb Bhuiyan of the National Citizen Party (NCP) to form "shadow cabinets." Modelled on Westminster parliamentary systems, shadow cabinets enable opposition parties to monitor government policies, propose alternatives, and ensure accountability, while also training future leaders in governance and policy-making.

Meanwhile, allegations of post-election violence have emerged across Panchagarh district. NCP leader Sarjis Alam claimed over 30 homes and businesses were targeted after the BNP victory.

Attacks in Tetulia, Atwari, and Sadar upazilas describe confrontations during rival processions, property damage, and threats. BNP leaders denied targeted violence, describing incidents as minor. Superintendent of Police Md Rabiul Islam confirmed that police responded to reports but found no major incidents, with no formal complaints filed.

Elsewhere, a BNP local office in Rupganj, Narayanganj, was set on fire early Saturday. Police said unidentified individuals smashed a window and ignited the blaze with petrol-like substances; investigations are ongoing. —*Agencies*

US, Iran to hold nuclear talks in Geneva

GENEVA, 15 FEB

Iran and the US will hold a second round of talks over Tehran's nuclear programme next week, the Swiss Foreign Ministry said.

Oman, which welcomed the first round of indirect talks on 6 February, will host the talks in Geneva, the Swiss Ministry said on Saturday, without specifying which days.

After the first discussions, US President Donald Trump warned Tehran that failure to reach an agreement would be "very traumatic". He has also said that regime change in Iran "would be the best thing that could happen".

Notably, nuclear talks last year broke down in June after Israel launched what became the 12-day war on Iran which ended after US bombing Iranian nuclear sites.

Trump has repeatedly threatened to use force to compel Iran to agree to constrain its nuclear programme. Iran has said it would respond with an attack of its own. Gulf Arab nations have warned any attack could spiral into another regional conflict.

PAHLAVI LAUNCHES PROTESTS ABROAD

Meanwhile, exiled Iranian crown prince Reza Pahlavi launched international protests against the Iranian regime. Addressing protesters in Munich, where a security conference involving top leaders is underway, Pahlavi asked, "Will the world stand with the people of Iran?"

The protesters were wearing caps that read "Make Iran Great Again". Pahlavi has repeatedly tried to flatter Trump. Republican Senator, Lindsey Graham also stood on the podium.

Pahlavi, who has lived in exile for over 50 years, said that if the internation community didn't act over Tehran's crackdown on protesters, it would enable the regime. Rights groups have say at least 7,000 people were killed and 10,000 detained, but the toll is likely higher. —*PTI*

US Republican Senator Lindsey Graham in Munich; exiled crown prince Reza Pahlavi; exiled Iranian prince Reza Pahlavi —*X/ @LINDSEYGRAHAMSC*

Bibi, Don target Iran-China trade

US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu agreed to press Iran to curb oil sales to China during their talk on Wednesday. "We will go full force against Iran regarding Iranian oil sales to China," Axios reported. China accounts for 80 per cent of Iran's oil sales. China's Foreign Ministry said it expects international law be respected.

'Pentagon warns Anthropic'

The Pentagon is considering ending its relations with Anthropic over the AI firm's restrictions on military use, Axios reported. The Pentagon is pushing for AI companies to let the military use their tools for weapons development, intelligence collection and battle operations, but Anthropic has not agreed. Pentagon's contract with Anthropic is USD 200 billion.

Sudan's RSF killed 6,000 in 3 days in 2025: UN

CAIRO, 14 FEB

At least 6,000 people were killed over three days when the Sudanese paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF) unleashed "a wave of violence … shocking in its scale and brutality" to capture the city of el-Fasher last October, the UN said.

The RSF's offensive to capture the city in Sudan's Dafur region included atrocities that amount to war crimes and possible crimes against humanity, the UN Human Rights Office said in a 29-page report released on Friday.

The RSF and their allied Arab militias, known as Janjaweed, overran el-Fasher, the Sudanese Armed Forces' (SAF) only stronghold in Darfur, on 26 October after more than 18 months of siege.

Sudan's civil war, broke out three years ago, has plunged the country into the largest humanitarian crisis —*MSF*

The report detailed mass killings, executions, sexual violence, abductions and torture, driven by ethnic motives.

The UN said that at least 4,400 people were killed inside el-Fasher, while another 1,600 were killed fleeing the city.

In one case, RSF fighters opened fire from heavy weapons on a crowd of 1,000 people sheltering in el-Fasher university, killing at least 500 people. One witness described it "like a scene out of a horror movie", the report said.

The report, however, warned that the actual scale of the death toll of the week-long offensive in el-Fasher was "undoubtedly higher."

UN High Commissioner Volker Turk said sexual violence is being used as a weapon of war as Sudan's three-year civil war fuels the world's worst humanitarian crisis, displacing millions and pushing many to the brink of famine. —*PTI*

Epstein Files: LA Olympic chair sells agency

- Casey Wasserman is selling his music agency amid emails that were showing his ties to Ghisalaine Maxwell.

LOS ANGELES, 15 FEB

Casey Wasserman, the chairman of the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics organising committee, is selling his talent music agency in the wake of emails were released showing his ties to convicted sex trafficker Ghislaine Maxwell.

Wasserman's emails with Maxwell surfaced as the US Department of Justice released files regarding late convicted sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein.

The documents revealed that in 2003 he swapped flirtatious emails with Maxwell, who would years later be accused of helping Epstein recruit and sexually abuse his victims.

Wasserman said in a Friday evening memo to his staff that he has begun the process of selling the company, according to a company spokesperson. The memo arrived days after the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 2028 (LA28) board review of Wasserman's Epstein file appearance. Conducted with an outside firm and Wasserman's full cooperation.

The committee stated Wasserman's ties to Epstein and Maxwell didn't exceed the now public records, concluding he should remain LA28 leader to ensure a successful games. —*PTI*

4 astronauts restock ISS after NASA evacuation

CAPE CANAVERAL, 15 FEB

The International Space Station (ISS) has returned to full strength with the arrival of four new astronauts to replace colleagues who bailed early because of health concerns. SpaceX delivered the US, French and Russian astronauts on Saturday, a day after launch from Cape Canaveral.

As part of NASA's SpaceX Crew-12 mission, four crew members from three space agencies will launch by Sunday to the ISS for a science expedition.

Last month's medical evacuation was NASA's first in 65 years of human spaceflight. One of four astronauts launched last summer suffered a serious health issue, prompting their hasty return and leaving three crew members — one American and two Russians — forcing NASA to pause spacewalks and trim research.

Jessica Meir and Jack Hathaway, European Space Agency astronaut Sophie Adenot, and Roscosmos cosmonaut Andrey Fedyaev.—*NAS*

Moving in for eight to nine months are NASA's Jessica Meir and Jack Hathaway, France's Sophie Adenot and Russia's Andrei Fedyaev. "Bonjour!" Adenot called once the capsule docked 277 miles (446 kilometres) up. Later, the hatches opened, hugs were exchanged and Meir said, "Let's get rolling."

NASA refused to divulge the identity of the astronaut who fell ill on 7 January, citing medical privacy, saying it did not alter preflight medical checks. —*PTI*

FUEL SHORTAGE & POWER BLACKOUT

Cuba delays cigar fair amid US energy siege

HAVANA, 15 FEB

Cuba's annual cigar fair, which was set to be held the last week of February, has been postponed, said organisers on Saturday. Amid the island, facing blackouts and severe fuel shortages brought about by a US oil embargo.

Habanos SA, a joint venture between the state-owned company Cubatabaco and international firm Altadis, holds the monopoly on Cuban cigars.

Every year, the company hosts the annual Habanos Festival, a key event for cigar aficionados and distributors, where attendees tour tobacco plantations, participate in auctions and witness the latest in craftsmanship.

The statement by Habanos SA did not set a new date for the 26th edition of the cigar fair. Several cultural events, including a book fair, have been postponed in Cuba this month as the island grapples with the most severe fuel shortages and power blackouts in years.

Habanos SA, a venture between state-owned, Cubatabaco and global firm Altadis, holds the monopoly on Cuban cigars —*CREDIT*

In late January, US President Donald Trump threatened to impose tariffs on any country that sold oil to Cuba, as Washington puts more pressure on the island's communist leadership to implement political and economic reforms.

Cuba imports about 60 per cent of its energy supply, and had long relied on Venezuela and Mexico for much of its oil.

But shipments from Venezuela were cancelled in January after the US removed Nicolás Maduro in a raid and tightened oversight of Venezuela's oil. Shipments from Mexico stopped in mid-February following Trump's tariff threat.

State-run Tabacuba said this year's cigar fair was postponed due to the country's "economic situation" amid intensified US economic, commercial and financial sanctions. —*PTI*

Lodha Developers acquires 80% stake in Pune's SRPL

NEW DELHI, 15 FEB

Lodha Developershas acquired an 80 per cent stake in Pune's Solidrise Realty for Rs 294 crore, part of its expansion strategy. The Mumbai-based firm, known for its Lodha brand, announced in a regulatory filing that it entered a share purchase agreement to buy the stake in Solidrise Realty Pvt Ltd (SRPL), which will become a subsidiary. Last month, Lodha reported a 1 per cent increase in net profit to Rs 956.9 crore in Q3, with total income rising to Rs 4,775.4 crore. The company bought five land parcels in Mumbai, Delhi-NCR, and Bengaluru, with an estimated sales value of Rs 34,000 crore. It has developed over 100 million sq ft and maintains a strong presence in Mumbai, Pune,

CNH to resume US tractor exports post tariffs cut

PUNE, 15 FEB

Italian-American agriculture equipment firm CNH's India unit plans to resume full-scale tractor exports to the US and invest approximately Rs 1,800 crore over the next two to three years, capitalising on a recent India-US trade agreement that reduced tariffs on Indian goods to 18 per cent from as high as 50 per cent. The New Delhi-based subsidiary, which operates brands like New Holland and Case IH, halted most US-bound shipments late last year after higher duties made them unprofitable. Production for the US market was paused in the final months of 2025, except for limited-compact tractor models used for testing and customer trials —*PTI*

Morocco eyes 80,000 footfalls from India in 2026

MUMBAI, 15 FEB

Morocco is expecting up to 80,000 visitors from India this year, in line with the growth momentum of the previous year, with a focus on group tours, MICE, FIT and older age groups of over 50 years. "We received an overall 20 million international visitors in 2025, of which there were 54,000 Indian travellers. It was over a 31 per cent increase from India from 2024, when we had a footfall of 41,000 visitors from India. In 2024, we hosted 17.4 million international tourists," Moroccan National Tourism Office (MNTO) Country General Manager, India, Jamal Younes Kilito told PTI. In 2026, MNTO hopes the current pace of growth will continue or even improve and looks forward to welcoming 75,000-80,000 Indians to visit Morocco.—*PTI*

L'Oreal adopts new plan amid India growth concerns

NEW DELHI, 15 FEB

L'Oreal is "not satisfied" with its Indian market performance, despite high single-digit growth, stated global CEO Nicolas Hieronimus. India contributes roughly 1 per cent of turnover and has not gained market share in 2025. Hieronimus said a new setup would start this year, with optimism for better results in 2026. The company has revised its India strategy, focusing on brands like CeraVe and La Roche-Posay, which are still small but promising. He noted that L'Oreal leads in hair care with Garnier and in hair colour. The firm has invested in factories and launched a dedicated Beauty Tech centre in Hyderabad to support digital and AI solutions, aiming to increase its presence in India significantly. —*PTI*

India is 1st in Global South to host AI Summit

45 nations along with big firms like Google, Anthropic and OpenAI to attend summit

NEW DELHI, 15 FEB

IIndia will host the India AI Impact Summit 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, marking the first global AI summit held in the Global South.

Ministerial delegations from over 45 countries will participate, alongside the UN Secretary-General and senior officials from international organisations, highlighting the summit's diplomatic and strategic significance.

The event features a star-studded lineup of tech leaders, including **Sundar Pichai (Google)**, Sam Altman (OpenAI), Demis Hassabis (DeepMind), **Dario Amodei (Anthropic)** and Brad Smith (Microsoft).

Their presence elevates the summit into a global focal point for AI developments, while Indian start-up founders will showcase indigenous foundation models, underlining India's growing role in the AI ecosystem.

India's summit agenda emphasises sovereign and inclusive AI. Building on its global reputation in digital public infrastructure through initiatives like UPI and Aadhaar, New Delhi aims to shape equitable AI access, set responsible deployment benchmarks, and promote shared compute and research frameworks for developing economies.

Potential outcomes include a joint declaration or roadmap for responsible AI adoption.

Unlike previous summits in the UK, Seoul and Paris, which focused on frontier risks and safety, India is foregrounding AI's real-world developmental impact—driving economic growth, social inclusion, and sustainability.

Key themes include the future of work, reskilling, and preparing India's young, tech-savvy workforce for AI-driven industries.

The summit will also highlight India's innovation-first regulatory model, balancing rapid technological advancement with safeguards against AI misinformation, deepfakes, and misuse. Unlike EU or US approaches, India's framework prioritises development while maintaining flexibility to regulate as needed.

As automation reshapes industries, workforce readiness will come under the spotlight.

India has one of the youngest workforces in the world, with over 65 per cent of the population under 35, giving the nation a substantial edge in the new era.

Given the favourable demographic profile, the young tech-savvy talent base can be trained and adapted for AI-driven industries, creating a foundation for innovation, digital services, and future-ready jobs. —*PTI*

- Unlike previous summits in the UK, Seoul and Paris, which focused on frontier risks and safety, India is foregrounding AI's real-world developmental impact—driving economic growth, social inclusion, and sustainability. Key themes include the future of work, reskilling and preparing India's tech-sav-

NVIDIA CEO TO SKIP AI SUMMIT

Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang would not be travelling to India attend AI Impact Summit due to "unforeseen circumstances," the company's media agency in India, MSL, said. While Mr. Huang was due to address the media in New Delhi on Wednesday (17 February, 2026), the company's media agency in India, MSL, said in an e-mail that he would not be travelling due to "unforeseen circumstances." Mr Huang was expected to be one of the biggest attractions at the summit, which will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. —*PTI*

INDIA RIGHT PLACE TO HOST AI SUMMIT, SAYS UN CHIEF

UNITED NATIONS, 15 FEB

India is the "right place" to host the AI summit and is a "very successful" emerging economy with a bigger influence in global affairs, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said.

In an exclusive interview with PTI at the UN Headquarters ahead of the India–AI Impact Summit 2026, Guterres underscored that Artificial Intelligence should benefit the entire world and not just be a privilege reserved for developed nations or two superpowers.

"I strongly congratulate India for organising this Summit. It's absolutely essential that AI develops itself to the benefit of everybody, everywhere and that countries in the Global South are part of the benefits of AI," he said.

The high-powered event being held from February 16 to 20 will be the first-ever AI summit hosted in the Global South and is anchored in the three guiding principles of 'People, Planet and Progress'.

Guterres, who will be travelling to India to attend the Summit, asserted "it would be totally unacceptable that AI would be just a privilege of the most developed countries or a division only between two superpowers," referring to the US and China. —*PTI*

India has all ingredients to be AI leader: Altman

NEW DELHI, 15 FEB

India has "all the ingredients to be a full-stack AI leader", OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said, citing its tech talent, national strategy and optimism about the technology's potential.

Altman wrote in The Times of India that the country combines homegrown expertise with a policy push to deploy AI at scale.

The government's IndiaAI Mission is designed to expand compute capacity, support startups and accelerate multilingual applications in healthcare, agriculture and public services to ensure AI becomes "an essential tool for hundreds of millions of people across India".

India now has "100 million weekly active users", the second-largest base after the US.

India also has "the largest number of students on ChatGPT worldwide" and ranks fourth globally in the use of Prism, OpenAI's free research and collaboration tool.

He stressed that widening AI's benefits requires progress on "access, adoption, and agency".

He outlined three priorities: scaling AI literacy, building computing and energy infrastructure, and integrating AI into real workflows. —*PTI*

- India has "all the ingredients to be a full-stack AI leader", OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said, citing its tech talent, national strategy and optimism about the technology's potential.

AI ADOPTION MODERATES HIRING AT ENTRY LEVEL: REPORT

NEW DELHI, 15 FEB

Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption has led firms to moderate hiring, primarily at the entry-level, according to a report.

According to a study by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) supported by OpenAI, AI adoption is reshaping hiring priorities across the sector.

The study finds that 63 per cent of firms reported increased demand for candidates with domain expertise and AI or data skills, pointing to a growing premium on hybrid skill sets as AI is integrated into core workflows.

Titled 'AI and Jobs: This Time Is No Different', the study represents one of the most comprehensive firm-level assessments of gen AI adoption in India to date. The study, conducted between November 2025 and January 2026, has received responses from 650 IT firms across 10 cities in India. Firms report a modest moderation in hiring, primarily concentrated at the entry level. —*PTI*

US TRADE DEAL EFFECT

FPI inflows rebound to Rs 19,675 cr in early Feb

NEW DELHI, 15 FEB

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) staged a sharp turnaround in early February, pumping Rs 19,675 crore into Indian equities in the first fortnight, supported by the US-India trade deal and easing global macro concerns.

The inflows follow three consecutive months of heavy selling, with FPIs pulling out Rs 35,962 crore in January, Rs 22,611 crore in December, and Rs 3,765 crore in November, according to data from depositories.

Overall, in 2025, FPIs pulled out a net Rs 1.66 lakh crore (USD 18.9 billion) from Indian equities, marking one of the worst periods for foreign flows. The selling was driven by volatile currency movements, global trade tensions, concerns over potential US tariffs and stretched equity valuations.

According to the data, FPIs invested Rs 19,675 crore in this month (till February 13).

Himanshu Srivastava, principal manager - research, at Morningstar Investment Research India, said the recent buying was supported by easing global macro concerns, particularly softer US inflation data, leading to a positive sentiment towards the interest rate cycle, which helped stabilise bond yields and the US dollar.Vaqarjaved Khan, senior fundamental analyst at Angel One, said the inflow was triggered by the US-India trade deal, the supportive Union Budget 2026 and easing global uncertainities. —*PTI*

INDIA FOREX RESERVES DROP FROM RECORD HIGH

NEW DELHI, 15 FEB

India's foreign exchange reserves dipped USD 6.711 billion in the week ending 6 February to USD 717.064 billion, after having reached a new all-time high, the Reserve Bank of India said.

Foreign exchange reserves dipped substantially, driven by a drop in gold reserves while foreign currency assets rose.

For the reported week, India's foreign currency assets (FCA), the largest component of foreign exchange reserves, stood at USD 570.053 billion, up USD 7.661 billion.

Gold reserves currently stood at USD 123.476 billion. India's foreign exchange reserves were sufficient to cover more than 11 months of merchandise imports. —*ANI*

6 top firms' mcap erodes by Rs 3L cr; TCS biggest loser

NEW DELHI, 15 FEB

The combined market valuation of six of the top 10 valued firms eroded by over Rs 3 lakh crore last week, with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys emerging as the biggest laggards.

The BSE benchmark declined by 953.64 points, or 1.14 per cent, over the past week.

TCS, Infosys, HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), and Bharti Airtel faced erosion from their valuation, while State Bank of India, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro and ICICI Bank were the gainers.

The market valuation of TCS tumbled Rs 90,198.92 crore to Rs 9,74,043.43 crore, while Infosys' valuation eroded by Rs 70,780.23 crore to Rs 5,55,287.72 crore.

The market valuation of HDFC Bank declined by Rs 54,627.71 crore to Rs 13,93,621.92 crore, and that of Reliance Industries plunged by Rs 41,883 crore to Rs 19,21,475.79 crore.

Life Insurance Corporation of India's market capitalisation (mcap) dropped by Rs 23,971.74 crore to Rs 5,46,226.80 crore, and that of Bharti Airtel declined by Rs 19,244.61 crore to Rs 11,43,044.03 crore.

However, the valuation of State Bank of India jumped Rs 1,22,213.38 crore to Rs 11,06,566.44 crore.

Reliance Industries remained the most valued firm, followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel and others.—*PTI*

Adven Biotech 1st homeo brand to get NABL certificate

NEW DELHI, 15 FEB

Pharmaceutical firm Adven Biotech has claimed to become the country's first homeopathy brand to receive certification from the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL), reinforcing India's push for global-quality healthcare standards in the Ayush sector.

The company said in a statement that the accreditation aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of positioning Ayush as a trusted global healthcare system, backed by science, quality, and international standards.

According to Adven Biotech, the NABL certification sets a new benchmark for accuracy, transparency, and credibility in homeopathic medicine manufacturing -- an area where quality assurance has long been a concern, it said.

The accreditation ensures that Adven's quality control and testing laboratories meet the most stringent national and international standards.

Founded with a mission to modernise homeopathy without compromising its core principles, Adven Biotech has consistently focused on research-driven formulations, ethical practices, and advanced manufacturing systems, according to the statement. —*PTI*

Religare demerges to unlock shareholder value

NEW DELHI, 15 FEB

Burman family backed-Religare Enterprises Ltd (REL) has approved a plan to demerge its financial services and insurance businesses into two separately listed entities.

The move is aimed at unlocking shareholder value and sharpening strategic focus.

This is the first major restructuring announced by the company since Burmans took over REL in February, 2025. Under the proposed scheme of arrangement, REL will retain its stake in Care Health Insurance Ltd, which will continue as an insurance-focused entity, it said.

The financial services business will be transferred on a going-concern basis to its subsidiary Religare Finvest Ltd (RFL).

The restructuring will streamline operations by creating two independent entities, allowing them to pursue sector-specific growth strategies and opportunities.

The transaction will be implemented through a scheme of arrangement to be filed with the National Company Law Tribunal and is subject to statutory and regulatory approvals. —*PTI*

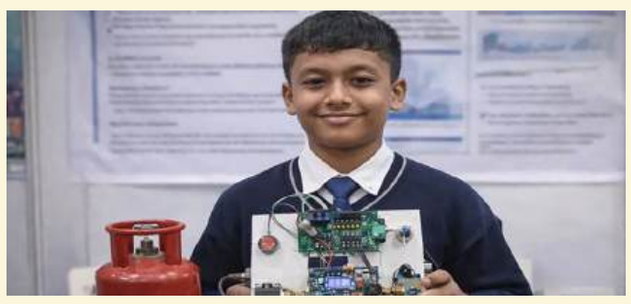
WINS JURY AWARD

Meghalaya student develops gas leak detector

SHILLONG, 15 FEB

A Class 9 student from Meghalaya's East Khasi Hills district won the jury award at the North East Science Fair & Innovation Festival for developing a system that detects gas leaks and initiates preventive measures to avert accidents, officials said on Sunday.

James Donald Kharkongor, a student of Mawngap District Christian Multipurpose HS School, received the recognition at the regional event organised by the National Science Centre, Guwahati, a unit of the National Council of Science Museums.



James, who hails from Laitpynter Synrangkaban village, said his father is a school teacher while his mother works as a housekeeper.

The award was conferred in recognition of the project's practical relevance, technical integration and potential societal impact, officials said.

The Smart LPG Safety and Hazard Prevention System uses advanced gas sensors to monitor air quality continuously and activates a buzzer alarm when gas concentration exceeds safe levels, they said.

An automated exhaust fan is simultaneously triggered to disperse accumulated gas and reduce the risk of ignition, they added.

A key feature of the device is an automatic solenoid valve that shuts off the gas supply upon detecting a leak, preventing further discharge and minimising the risk of fire or explosion, officials said.

The system is also integrated with IoT-based alerts for remote monitoring and real-time notifications, the officials said. —*PTI*

WI seal Super 8 spot with comfortable win vs Nepal

Monank, Krishnamurthi guide USA to 31-run win against Namibia

MUMBAI, 15 FEB

The West Indies beat Nepal by nine wickets to become the first team to qualify for the Super Eights of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Sunday.

Jason Holder took four wickets (for 27), and captain Shai Hope hit a half-century (61) as the two-time World champion sailed through the group stages without much fuss.Chasing a modest 134 for its third straight victory after battling knocks by Nepal's Dipendra Singh Airee (58) and Sompal Kami (26 not out), the Caribbean side completed its with 28 balls to spare.After pacer Holder laid the platform earlier, Hope and Shimron Hetmyer (46 not out) took the team home with superb knocks to rule Nepal out of the reckoning for the next stage of the tournament.

A little over four months since its confidence-boosting 2-1 T20 series win over a weakened West Indies in Sharjah, Nepal arrived for the clash seeking its first victory in Group C of the World Cup following defeats by England and Italy.It made a poor start after being asked to bat by table-topper, West Indies, with Kushal Bhurtel bowled by Akeal Hosein on the fifth delivery of the innings and skipper Rohit Paudel trapped leg-before-wicket by Matthew Forde shortly afterwards.

Holder ramped up the pressure by having Aasif Sheikh caught in the deep with a loose ball before Nepal limped to 22 for three in six overs, the lowest PowerPlay score in this edition of the event, silencing a large group of Nepal fans.

Shai Hope and Shimron Hetmyer -PTI

West Indies 134 for 1 (Hope 61*, Hetmyer 46*) beat Nepal 133 for 8 (Airee 58, Holder 4-27, Forde 1-10) by nine wickets

USA registered their second successive win, defeating Namibia by 31 runs, as skipper Monank Patel shrugged off a string of modest scores to produce a fluent half-century in their T20 World Cup group clash here on Sunday.

Riding on Patel's 30-ball 52 and Sanjay Krishnamurthi's unbeaten 68 off just 33 deliveries, the United States piled up an imposing 199 for 4.

In reply, Namibia made a spirited start, with opener Louren Steenkamp striking an impressive 58 off 39 balls and adding 54 runs for the first wicket with Jan Frylinck (19).

However, once Steenkamp was dismissed to leave Namibia at 112 for 3, the chase lost momentum, and they eventually finished well short at 168 for 6. South African-born USA pacer Shadley van Schalkwyk was the pick of the bowlers, returning impressive figures of 2 for 30.

Brief scores:

USA 199 for 4 in 20 overs (Monank Patel 52, Sanjay Krishnamurthi 68 not out; Willem Myburgh 2/22).

Namibia 168 for 6 in 20 overs (Louren Steenkamp 58; Shadley van Schalkwyk 2/30). —*PTI*

USA's Milind Kumar and Sanjay Krishnamurthi greet each other during the ICC Twenty20 World Cup match against Namibia in Chennai -PTI

Ishan Kishan records 3rd-highest T20I score for India vs Pak

COLOMBO, 15 FEB

Opening batter Ishan Kishan recorded the third-highest T20I score by an Indian against Pakistan, during a T20 World Cup 2026 match in Colombo on Sunday.

Kishan scored 77 from just 40 balls, smashing 10 fours and three sixes, to give India a strong start after it lost the toss against Pakistan.

The left-handed Kishan began his knock with a pulled six against pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi. He soon began to take apart Pakistan's spinners.

He was eventually dismissed by Saim Ayub, who had him bowled.

Virat Kohli holds the two highest scores for India against Pakistan in the shortest format - 82* in 2022 and 78* in 2012. —*PTI*

HIGHEST T20I INDIVIDUAL SCORES FOR INDIA VS PAK

- Gautam Gambhir 75 (Johannesburg, 2007)
- Virat Kohli 78* (Colombo, 2012)
- Virat Kohli 82* (Melbourne, 2022)
- Abhishek Sharma 74 (Dubai, 2025)
- Ishan Kishan 77 (Colombo, 2026)

ICC T20 WC MATCHES TOMORROW

UAE eye middle-order fix against wounded Afghanistan

UAE will look to plug their middle-order frailties, particularly against spin, when they take on a hurting Afghanistan in a must-win Group D clash of the T20 World Cup here on ***Monday 11 am***.The two sides head into the contest after contrasting results in their previous outings. UAE scraped past Canada to register their first win, while Afghanistan suffered a heartbreaking defeat despite pushing their last game into two Super Overs in one of the greatest T20 matches.

England eye Super Eight spot as fierce football rivals Italy stand in way

Two-time champions England will look to seal their Super Eights berth when they take on T20 World Cup debutants and fierce football rivals Italy in their final Group C match here on ***Monday 3 pm***.England and Italy share a fierce sporting rivalry on the football pitch, producing some unforgettable moments, including the former's penalty shootout win in the Euro 2020 final at Wembley.On Monday, however, the rivalry will shift from football to cricket for the first time, adding an interesting sub-plot to this clash at Eden Gardens that witnessed a 35,000-plus crowd for the England-Scotland match on Saturday.

Australia mulls including Smith in crucial game against Sri Lanka

Injury-hit Australia could consider bringing in veteran Steve Smith to bolster their stuttering batting as the former champions aim to keep their fate in their own hands when they face Sri Lanka in a crucial T20 World Cup Group B clash here on ***Monday 7 pm***.Australia risk an early exit after suffering a shock 23-run defeat to Zimbabwe in their previous match. They now need victories in their remaining group matches against Oman and Sri Lanka to progress to the Super Eights without relying on other results.Australia are currently third on the group table with two points from as many games.

-PTI

NZ's Lockie to return home for birth of first child

AHMEDABAD, 15 FEB

New Zealand pace bowler Lockie Ferguson will return home on Sunday to be with his wife for the birth of their first child and miss the team's final Group D match of the T20 World Cup against Canada. Head coach Rob Walter said the plan is for Ferguson to rejoin the squad to be available for the Super 8s of the tournament should they reach that stage. New Zealand, who suffered a seven-wicket loss to South Africa in their Group D match here on Saturday, face Canada in Chennai on Tuesday. "It's an incredibly exciting time for Lockie and Emma, and we're pleased that he'll be at home for such a special occasion," said Walter in a New Zealand Cricket (NZC) statement. "At this stage, we won't be replacing Lockie in the squad as the plan would be for him to return for the Super 8 phase of the tournament.—*PTI*

Rahul, Padikkal pile on runs against Uttarakhand

UTTARAKHAND, 15 FEB

Batting first is increasingly seen as the first step into a dystopian world. So comfortable are teams chasing a known target especially in limited-overs cricket that sides wield the willow first only to "challenge" themselves.

One wonders if Uttara khand was thinking on these lines when it chose to field on the first morning of the 2026-26 Ranji Trophy semifinal against Karnataka at the Ekana Cricket Stadium on Sunday.

It was, admittedly, a red-ball game, but it is also a format where the first-innings lead matters.But by stumps, Kunal Chandela & Co. would be rueing that decision as Karnataka rode on K.L. Rahul's 25th First-Class ton (141, 211b, 11x4, 5x6) and skipper Devdutt Padikkal's ninth (148 batting, 236b, 16x4, 2x6) to rack up 355 for two.

First-time semifinalist Uttarakhand will now be hoping that when it eventually bats, the pitch stays as true as it did on day one.There was the oddball that bounced disconcertingly and a few that seemed, but none too dangerous.

And Rahul and Padikkal feasted, putting on a grand 278-run partnership after Mayank Agarwal was caught early in the slips.Rahul was reprieved on 47 when wicket-keeper Saurabh Rawat missed a stumping off an arm ball from Mayank Mishra (18-1-88-0), and survived a half-chance on 136 when the cherry fell short of the slip fielder. But for those moments, and until a leading edge led to his downfall, his stay was chanceless. —*PTI*

Klaebo wins 9th gold medal in cross-country skiing

TESERO, 15 FEB

Norway's Johannes Hoesflot Klaebo has won his ninth gold medal in cross-country skiing, setting a Winter Games record, at the Milan Cortina Olympics.

The 29-year-old anchored Sunday's 4 x 7.5-kilometer relay in the men's competition for his fourth gold of the 2026 Games.He had shared the record with three retired Norwegian athletes, Marit Bjoergen and Bjorn Daehlie in cross-country skiing, and Ole Einar Bjoerndalen in the biathlon.

He now stands alone at the top."I like the sound of that! It's a pretty nice title," Klaebo said after the race."But it's special to do this together with this group. —*PTI*

WOMEN'S ASIA CUP RISING STARS

Vrinda, spinners lead India to 8-wicket win over Pakistan

BANGKOK, 15 FEB

Skipper Radha Yadav led a dominant spin display before Dinesh Vrinda hammered a blazing half-century as India A Women cruised to an emphatic eight-wicket win over Pakistan A Women in the Women's Asia Cup Rising Stars here on Sunday.

The victory marked India A's first win of the tournament after its seven-wicket defeat to the United Arab Emirates A Women in the opener on Friday.

Skipper Radha Yadav -PTI

India crush Australia by 9 wickets in first Women's T20I

India were clinical with both bat and ball as they crushed Australia by nine wickets under the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern (DLS) method in the first Women's T20 International to start their tour Down Under on a resounding note here Sunday.

Seamer Arundhati Reddy (4/22) led an excellent bowling display as India packed off Australia for 133.

Such was the Indian bowlers' performance that Australia were bundled out with two overs to spare.

In reply, vice-captain Smriti Mandhana was unbeaten on a 17-ball 16 with Jemimah Rodrigues giving her company, when the heavens opened up to force an interruption.

Play could not resume after that, and India, who were 50 for one in 5.1 overs, were declared deserving winners. The DLS par score after 5.1 overs was 29.

The big-hitting Shafali Verma played her part before being dismissed by Australia's new skipper Sophie Molineux, smashing her way to an 11-ball 21. —*PTI*

X/@QATAROPEN

Muchova defeats teenager Mboko to win Qatar Open

DUBAI, 15 FEB

Karolina Muchova captured her first WTA 1000 crown and her first title since 2019 with an impressive 6-4, 7-5 victory over Canadian teen sensation Victoria Mboko in the Qatar Open final on Saturday. After battling back from a set and a break down in the semifinals against Maria Sakkari the previous night, Muchova, 29, was in fierce form against Mboko to clinch the biggest title of her career. "It's been a while since I won a tournament, so it's nice to get that feeling again, to be reminded of that victory feeling again," said Muchova during the trophy ceremony.—*PTI*

Freestyle Skier Kateryna Kotsar gets engaged after Qualifying for final -PTI

NEUER IS OUT FOR SEVERAL WEEKS WITH A CALF INJURY

MUNICH, 15 FEB

Bayern Munich goalkeeper and captain Manuel Neuer has been ruled out of action for several weeks with a calf injury.

The 39-year-old Neuer sustained a minor muscle tear in his left calf during Saturday's 3-0 Bundesliga win at Werder Bremen, Bayern said Sunday.

The club said Neuer will be out "for the time being," likely ruling him out of "der Klassiker" against Borussia Dortmund on 28 Feb.

Bayern leads the Bundesliga by six points from Dortmund with 12 rounds remaining.

Neuer sustained the injury during the first half on Saturday. —*PTI*

FRANCE'S FOURCADE, GERMAN RELAY TEAM GET REALLOCATED GOLDS

ANTERSELVA, 15 FEB

Sixteen years after finishing the 15-kilometer mass start race at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics, Martin Fourcade was awarded his gold medal for the race on Sunday, while Slovak biathlete Pavol Hurajt received his silver, and the bronze was given to Christoph Sumann of Austria during a medal reallocation ceremony at the Antholz-Anterselva Biathlon Arena at the Milan Cortina Winter Games.

And 12 years after competing in the 2014 Sochi Games, the German relay team of Erik Lesser, Daniel Boehm, Arnd Peiffer, and Simon Schempp received their gold medals. The Austrian team of Christoph Sumann, Daniel Mesotitsch, Simon Eder, and Dominik Landertinger was awarded silver. Bronze went to the Norwegian relay team of Tarjei Boe, Johannes Thingnes Boe, Ole Einar Bjoerndale,n and Emil Hegle Svendsen. —*PTI*

Aiava slams tennis culture in retirement post

MILAN, 15 FEB

Australian player Destanee Aiava announced on Sunday her impending retirement from tennis and claimed the sport had a "racist, misogynistic, homophobic and hostile" culture.

In an expletive-laden statement on social media, Aiava described tennis as her "toxic boyfriend" and said she was looking forward to a fresh start.

"My life is not meant to be lived in misery and half-assed," wrote Aiava, who said 2026 would be her last year on tour.

"My ultimate goal is to be able to wake up every day and genuinely say that I love what I do, which I think everyone deserves a chance at.

"I'm 25, turning 26 this year, and I feel so far behind everyone else, like I'm starting from scratch. —*PTI*

LA LIGA 2025-26

Real Madrid thrashes Real Sociedad 4-1

DALLAS, 15 FEB

Vinicius Jr. struck twice from the penalty spot as Real Madrid powered to a 4-1 home victory over Real Sociedad on Saturday that sent it provisionally to the top of La Liga.

Madrid moved to 60 points, two clear of second-placed Barcelona, last season's champion, which has a game in hand and visits local rival Girona on Monday.

"We are happy because we made a great match, it was a near flawless performance, we could have scored even more, but the important thing is that we've won decisively," captain Valverde told Real Madrid TV.Madrid struck within five minutes of kick-off when 21-year-old Gonzalo Garcia steered Trent Alexander-Arnold's cross beyond 'keeper Alex Remiro.

The visiting side levelled in the 21st minute after Dean Huijsen fouled Yangel Herrera, and Mikel Oyarzabal converted the spot kick.

Vinicius restored the lead four minutes later when Jon Aramburu brought him down, calmly sending Remiro the wrong way.

Federico Valverde made it 3-1 in the 31st minute, curling into the top corner, and Vinicius completed the scoring three minutes into the second half, winning and converting another penalty after Aramburu clipped him, as Madrid secured an eighth consecutive La Liga win.

Madrid nearly scored a fifth in the 70th when Gonzalo raced clear and nudged the ball past the keeper, only for Jon Martin to throw himself into the line of fire and block. Vinicius thought he had completed his hat-trick in the 89th minute, heading home from a free kick, but the effort was ruled out for offside. —*PTI*